

WALKING WITH INTEGRITY IN TIMES OF ADVERSITY
STUDY EIGHT

The Integrity of Waiting . . . Not Worrying

Selections from Habakkuk

Everyone is waiting for something. Everyone has a deep heartache, a serious prayer that still has not been answered. Habakkuk speaks with relevance to all of us.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

IN his introduction to the book of Habakkuk in *The Swindoll Study Bible*, Pastor Chuck Swindoll expresses the central theme of this ancient book:

Habakkuk provides us with one of the most remarkable sections in all of Scripture—an extended dialogue between God and one of His prophets. Habakkuk initiated this conversation because of his distress about God’s seeming inaction in the world. He wanted to see God do something more, particularly in the area of bringing justice to evildoers.¹

Habakkuk’s complaints about unchecked evil echo throughout the halls of history. We could even make the very same complaints today! We live in a violent and shameless culture in which right is ridiculed and wrong is legitimized. Like Habakkuk, we are surrounded by people “who love to argue and fight” and “justice has become perverted” (Habakkuk 1:3–4).

Why doesn’t God intervene?

In this *Searching the Scriptures* study, we’ll hear God’s answer. But first we must follow Habakkuk’s example to *wait* on the Lord and *listen* to His voice in Scriptures. Only then will we find the faith to trust God through times of adversity and feel His peace when we can’t make sense of our world.



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PREPARE YOUR HEART

As we open, we turn to the Lord in prayer.

Father, I call to You, my great God. Speak to me through this ancient book. Talk in terms that I can understand, and begin a work of changing my thinking so that I can change my way of living. In Jesus' name, amen.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Take the next few moments to familiarize yourself with the small book of *Habakkuk*. Notice how it begins with a sob, “How long, O LORD, must I call for help?” (Habakkuk 1:2), and ends with a song, “The Sovereign LORD is my strength!” (3:19).

These three chapters trace a personal struggle within the prophet rather than a public address to the people. Chapters 1–2 focus on Habakkuk’s *dialogue with God*. Chapter 3 records his *praise to God*, after Habakkuk waited on God and listened to His words of reassurance.



Observation: Dialogue with God and Praise

Most Bibles include headings added by modern editors that divide the chapters of a book into sections. Although they are not in the earliest texts, they can help us in the observation phase to see the structure and flow of the book.

What headings do you find in the New Living Translation of Habakkuk? Write them in the lines below.

1:2–4: _____

1:5–11: _____

1:12–2:1: _____

2:2–20: _____

3:1–19: _____



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Habakkuk was a man of integrity living in a nation without integrity, and it became *unbearable* for him! Summarize his first complaint to the Lord in *Habakkuk 1:1–4*. What tearful questions tumbled out of his heart? Have you asked questions like these?

Summarize the Lord’s response to Habakkuk’s first complaint in *1:5–11*. What shocking news did the Lord reveal to Habakkuk that must have taken the prophet’s breath away?

Habakkuk struggled emotionally with God’s plan. What didn’t make sense to Habakkuk about God’s plan, according to *1:12–17*?

After Habakkuk poured out his heartache and fear to the Lord, he climbed up to his watchtower and said,

*“There I will wait to see what the LORD says
and how he will answer my complaint.” (2:1)*



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Habakkuk knew when to speak and when to listen to the Lord in quiet humility. How did the Lord answer Habakkuk's core fear in [Habakkuk 2:4](#)?

The Lord revealed to Habakkuk a vision of the future in which the Babylonians would pay for their arrogance and brutality. Find the five “woes” against the Babylonians in [2:6–20](#) in the New American Standard Bible (NASB), English Standard Version (ESV), or New International Version (NIV), and summarize these judgments in the space below.

How foolish of the Babylonians to put their faith in their lifeless wooden idols rather than in the Lord! God would eventually judge the wicked and greedy idolators, but not before He used the Babylonians to deliver judgment on Judah.

The news of coming judgment was a hard pill for Habakkuk to swallow, but his heart could rest in God's sovereign plan. Pick a couple of lines from the prophet's prayer in [chapter 3](#) that describe God's awesome power and write them below.



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Habakkuk concludes his book at peace, quietly waiting for the day “when disaster will strike the people who invade us” (Habakkuk 3:16). His soaring anthem of faith in 3:17–19 has touched the hearts of countless people of God who have walked through adversity in tears. In the interpretation section, let’s look closer at the meaning of these lines and the principles we can draw from them.

After his complaints, Habakkuk concluded, “I must let God be God as I stand back and wait for Him to work.” —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: Habakkuk’s Song of Faith and Ours

When Habakkuk understood the power and character of the Lord, he could rest from his worries. Out of his quiet listening to God emerged a prayerful song that follows a simple rhythm: “Even though . . . even though . . . even though . . . yet I will . . . I will” (Habakkuk 3:17–18).

What do the “even though” parts of Habakkuk’s prayer represent, in [Habakkuk 3:17](#)? What was Habakkuk referring to? What “even thoughts” exist in our day?

The prophet responded to his world falling apart in a surprising way. Instead of wailing, he rejoiced! Not in the adversity but “in the LORD” and “in the God of my salvation” (3:18). What lesson was he teaching his readers, and us, in [3:18](#)?



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What truth was the foundation of Habakkuk's joyful confidence, according to *Habakkuk 3:19*?

What overarching principle does Habakkuk's prayer teach all followers of God who must travel the difficult road of adversity and confusion about God's ways?

Habakkuk and his people were living in evil times—about to be conquered by a merciless enemy who would destroy their temple, take their God-given land, and send them away to a godless country. Yet, Habakkuk modeled how we can live by faith—a theme that strikes at the heart of our hope of eternal life.



Correlation: Saved by Faith Alone in Christ Alone

Centuries later, the apostle Paul drew out of the obscure book of Habakkuk a line that has formed the bulwark of our salvation in Christ.

What line did Paul quote, according to *Romans 1:16–17*? What central truth about our salvation was Paul making?



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How did Paul elaborate this truth in *Galatians 3:10–11*?

Upon this foundation stone, the Protestant Reformation was built as Martin Luther (1483–1546) championed the news of salvation by faith alone in Christ alone. But it was faithful Habakkuk who first declared that life flows from a steadfast faith in God rather than pride in our own strength.

Faith is the only way we come to God, not by keeping every element of the law, which we can't. By faith we trust in our God. This truth landed solidly on Habakkuk. He got it, and it changed him. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: From Habakkuk to Us

The righteous shall live by faith. What relief that simple truth brought to Habakkuk, to Paul, to Luther, and finally to us! How can we live out this salvation truth in our daily lives? We can begin by memorizing five statements about our sovereign God. Even though disasters strike and the world seems to be falling apart, remember:

1. God is able, and I am not.
2. God knows what's best, and I do not.
3. God sees the end from the beginning, and I cannot.
4. God should have His way, and I should not.
5. God must be glorified through this trial, and I must not.



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Are you in a situation in which you're calling out to the Lord, "How long, O Lord?" If so, what is the nature of your heartache?

How do the five truths above speak to you in your situation?

Write your version of Habakkuk's prayer from Habakkuk 3:17–19. What are your "even though" statements? What are your "I will" statements? With what truth about God can you conclude your prayer?

When we get a clear view of God, we change. His strength carries us not only through our adversity but above it, as we sing the jubilant song of the ancient prophet.

*"The Sovereign LORD is my strength!
He makes me as surefooted as a deer,
able to tread upon the heights." (Habakkuk 3:19)*



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A FINAL PRAYER

Father, in the pit of my struggles, I acknowledge that You are able. You know what's best. You know the end from the beginning. Your plan is far better than mine, and You are the one who will be glorified in the end. I rest in Christ alone, who is my salvation and my strength. In His name I pray, amen.

Endnote

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *The Swindoll Study Bible* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2017), 1092.

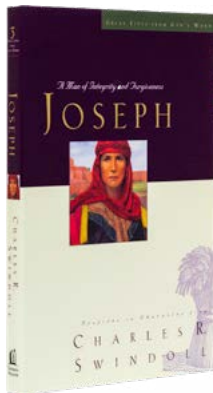


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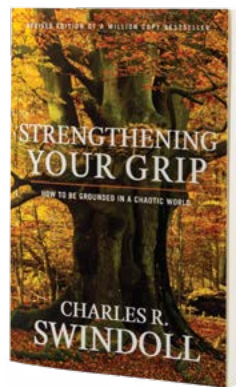
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Tools for Digging Deeper



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For the 2022 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Bryce Klabunde, vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.



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