



Sermon Transcription • Habakkuk 1:1-11 (NIV)

## Why?...What?!

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**[Please Note: This transcript has been lightly edited for ease of reading. Also, some headings have been added in square brackets to aid the reader in locating portions of the sermon.]**

Why me? And why this? If you haven't yet asked this question, if you've never asked a question like this before in your life, sooner or later you'll probably have to ask yourself that question: Lord, why? Why's all this happening to me? I pray, I seek your face, I desire to do your will, but all these things that are negative keep happening to me. Why? See, one of my children going to school is struggling currently with just connecting with some friends and things like that, getting along with them, and just feeling fitting in class, just at that age. And so I encourage my child to pray and seek the Lord's face and ask God to address this thing. And so they would pray and seek the Lord's face, but in a few days later, a week later, would be crying in their room saying, "Dad, why is God not answering my prayer? Because I thought things were going to get better when I bring this issue to God, but yet the issue gets worse and worse." Why? Why all this and why me?

Today we are starting a series in a book called Habakkuk. Some of you'd say, "Habakkuk" if you're Kenyan like me "Haba-kook". We are starting this series on this book of Habakkuk. It's a small little book, three chapters, we're going to spend about five weeks in this little book. And what is remarkable here is the book of Habakkuk invites us into a dialogue that he, the prophet Habakkuk, is having with God. And so we are kinda like invited to this conversation that this guy's having with God, and the question that the prophet is bringing to God is that same "Why?" question. Why, Lord? What's going on here? Why is there all this chaos and it seems like you're not doing anything here.

Now, let me set the scene for you just so that you know what time frame we are talking about here. So Habakkuk, [pronouncing it in different ways], Ugh yeah it's going to be confusing tonight. Anyway. So, Habakkuk was just came into the scene right at the death, around the death of King Josiah. Now King Josiah's a king in Israel, in Judah, in particular. So he had died, the king had passed away, and this was a good king. He had brought a lot of reform and things like that, people had come back to God, they were not worshipping the idols. So upon his death, other kings come and take over. But then as soon as Josiah dies, all these other kings come, they're now wicked kings. They're evil kings. And so they take the nation back into their idolatry. And so there is just godlessness and wickedness happening all across this nation. So, Habakkuk is looking at this wickedness and is wondering, "Lord, what is going on here? There is violence, this perversion, this all sort of crazy things happening here." So Habakkuk is praying and in his prayer, in his mind, he's thinking, "Maybe God will send another good king. Like Josiah! A king who will bring all this reform and then will be good. And then the nation



will be worshipping God, and things will go well.” If is, God to answer that prayer, bring a good king, we’re good. But then the Lord will respond and the answer is not what Habakkuk thought or the answer that Habakkuk was expecting. It’s a very different, very different. So it’s almost like blindsided answer. So this will be very interesting as we engage this little book. So today, for our time, we’ll be looking at verse 1-11 of Habakkuk 1. And we’ll look at it as three headings here. There are two questions and God responds. So it’ll be like, Habakkuk could be saying, “Hey Lord, what’s with the unanswered prayers? What’s up with this unanswered prayers?” And “Lord, what’s with all this uncontrolled evil?” To which the Lord will look at him and say, “Dude. Dude. Here’s an unexpected answer for you.” So let’s unpack this.

### **[Lord, What’s with Unanswered Prayer]**

Lord, what’s with all this unanswered prayer? Habakkuk chapter one, we’ll go to verse two, because verse one just introduces himself. He introduces himself as prophet. So he says in Habakkuk 1:2,

“How long, Lord, must I call for help,  
but you do not listen?  
Or cry out to you, “Violence!”  
but you do not save?”

[Repeats reading of Habakkuk 1:2] How long? See, I grew up in a home where my father was an alcoholic. And my dad would call my mom all sorts of names. Now, think I’ve shared my story here before. And he would begin selling household items so that he could feed his alcoholism. And we prayed and prayed and prayed and prayed. And when he was a little younger, my dad was very violent and so he would come and beat mom and, all of us: myself and my two other brothers, three boys at home. My dad was very violent. I had some two cousins who lived with us and he was also violent physically with them as well. When he was either drunk or when he didn’t have money to go and serve his alcoholism. Very violent. And called my mom every vile name you can think of...for years. And guess what? To this day, we are still praying for my dad. Forty plus years, for as long as I can remember, my dad has struggled with this issue. So we pray, “Lord how long must we call for help? How long must we cry out to you? How long?” And yet, he do not answer. How long?

See in Habakkuk’s day, here he will say, “Lord I cry out to you, ‘Violence! Violence!’ but you do not save.” What is he talking about? There was so much corruption and so much violence that was happening there. People would be murdered. So for example, even a contemporary example of what was happening there. So I have a friend in Africa, who he and his wife went to visit some other friends, you know the way you would visit someone in the evening, you’ve been invited for dinner, you’d have dinner, you play some cards, you hang out, you chat a little bit, catch up on life, hold each other accountable and so on... And so after, after they had a good fellowship, my buddy and his wife jump into their car and they want to drive home. So on their drive home, they were stopped at gunpoint by some three thugs. And so, the gun is right there, and my buddy stopped and it’s at night, and of course we are black, so sometimes it’s hard to see because it’s at night....try playing hard and seek



with me, [clicks tongue] I'd win. So, it's at night, and there these thugs with their gun, pointed at my friend's vehicle here. It was his wife driving. And so one of the thugs comes opens the driver's door, puts the gun by her ribs there and fires. And drags her out and my buddy's dragged out, and then he comes to his wife, because his wife bleeding. And he holds her and pleads with these guys, "Please, just drop me by the hospital, you can take the car. Drop me by the hospital." So they get to the hospital, they don't even come close to the emergency, no. It's like a distance. They stopped way out there. And so now, my buddy has to carry his wife, who knows she's dying and she's saying, "Make sure you take care of the kids." She died...in his arms. Lord, we cry out to you, "Violence!" Do not save. You do not save. We wept with my friend. But the sad thing is, sometimes the cops in Africa, they don't do their job well. These perpetrators were never found. This messed up my friend big time. Big time.

In Habakkuk's day, there's a lot of idolatry happening there. A lot of child sacrificing to a God called 'Moloch', where they would burn a child so that this God would bless them. This is what Habakkuk is seeing. And so he's saying, "Lord how long? How long? How long? How long is all this going to go, Lord? How long?" And many of us here, maybe your situation is not as dire as Habakkuk's was. Maybe for you it's barrenness, been crying out to God, "Lord, a child! A child, Lord! A child would be great." Or some of us here might be marital issues, or like the video we just saw, singleness where you thought you were gonna get married, and things go sideways and you're like "Lord! How long will this go?" Health challenges, or it might be a loved one who's wandered away from God and you're praying, "Lord, would you bring them back, bring them back." And they are not coming back. "Lord, how long? How long?" But, but, I want you to notice something here, look again at that verse, verse two. Habakkuk is praying and saying,

"How long, Lord, must I call for help, but *you* do not listen? [That's an assumption. **How long, Lord, must I call for help, but *you* do not listen?**]  
Or cry out to you, "Violence!"  
but you do not save?"

Another assumption there. These are assumptions that God is *not* listening or that God is *not* capable of saving or has refused to save. That, my dear friends, is an assumption and many of us, not many of us, let me take that back. There are many, who have walked away from the faith. There are many who have walked away in the faith because of the assumption that God *does not* save. That God *is not* listening. Because you're praying and things get worse. And there are many who have walked away from faith and some of you probably know some of those who've walked away. Now hold that thought, we'll come back to it later. We'll answer that question. Hold the thought. Let's not assume that God is not listening. Let's not assume that God is not capable of saving. So hold that thought, we'll come back to it later.



## [Lord, What's with Uncontrolled Evil]

Habakkuk is not done yet. He's not done yet. He continues, "Lord, what's with all this uncontrolled evil? What's with all this evil that's happening?" Look at Habakkuk 1:3-4,

"Why do you make me look at injustice?  
Why do you tolerate wrongdoing?  
Destruction and violence are before me;  
there is strife, and conflict abounds.  
Therefore the law is paralyzed,  
and justice never prevails.  
The wicked hem in the righteous,  
so that justice is perverted."

So, I'll give you three very quick illustrations here. Yesterday what happened in Virginia Beach, some of you who follow the news would know what happened yesterday in the United States. There was another shooting, yet another one. Eleven people died yesterday. Shooter I think was the 12th. And today they just released, I think it was today, they just released the names of the deceased. And I read the names of the deceased, and beside their names they would say where they're from and how long they had worked in that office building where the shooter went from floor to floor killing people. A disgruntled worker. Some people had worked 41 years. So I'm imagining, this individual is now planning his retirement, right? Forty one years! So you're just about to retire here...you've been working for the city, maybe your retirement party is towards the end of July or June. And then you're done for the summer. Some had worked 28 years, others had 6 months, just a few days. Now I can imagine their families, and what's going on there. What would you say to a grieving family member of such a person today? You see, the perpetrator was also killed. So now there is no justice. There is no court case, there is no victim impact statement that you can read to the person who brought all this violence to your loved one. So now what do you do there? What about the shooter's family, who now have to live with the aftermath? They would probably receive some death threat now. A lot of hatred will be now poured on them. Yet they had nothing to do with what the perpetrator did. So what do you say to them there? "Lord, why?" Habakkuk would say, "Do you tolerate wrongdoing? Why do you make me look at injustice?"

Another example, so I was reading the BBC app, I follow world news using the BBC app on my phone. And so I was reading this story, a very fascinating story, called "Secret Spectacles". You might want to Google that and read this story. It's a story about a Ghanaian young man who grew up in a very poor family but was very into spy movies and things like that. And then he had heard stories about how African migrants who want to go to Europe. The treacherous journey from Africa to Europe. And how many of them died. People disappear. So he wanted to film this because he wanted to get the true story. So he buys these glasses, these spectacles that have a little camera and a little USB thing that you can put in there, a little memory card that you can put in there—be very discreet. Because he'll be taking pictures of the human traffickers, who are moving people from Africa to



Europe, across the desert, through the sea, to Europe. So he begins this journey and he just talks about the atrocities that are happening there. The amount of rapes and violence, and deaths, and how many of these people who are leaving their loved ones hoping to get to Europe to a better life. How many of them are sold as slaves in the Middle East. And many times the beatings, the hunger, the torture, and this is happening today. And even right now, as I speak, there are thousands of people who right now probably are standing at a slave market at some desert corner in some portion of Northern Africa, being sold as slaves, yet they left home with this idea: “That maybe I could make it there and my family will have a good life.” But they are stuck now. What do you do there? So this young man chronicles all this. Lord, why is the law paralyzed? Justice never prevails. Why do you let me look at all these things? Why? Why? Why?

Final illustration. There’s this lady called Asia Bibi, I talked about her a few months ago, and some of you know this story. This Pakistani lady, who is a Christian, and she was busy working in a field in Pakistan with some Muslim women. And then wanted to share a bowl of water or cup of water with another lady, and then she was now accused of blaspheming against the prophet Muhammad. And she says, “No I didn’t do that.” By verge of the fact that she was a Christian. So she was thrown in prison for 10 years, on a death sentence. So recently she was released from prison. Recently, many Christians have been praying for her. So she was released and now she made her way to Canada to some secret location. So we don’t know where she is, but she’s in Canada. So a lot of Christians are all excited until two weeks ago. What happened two weeks ago? There was some dude who came from somewhere, and came into Canada, and just took a video of his torso. And in the video, he says that he is here to complete the work that should’ve been done in Pakistan to this woman. He’s looking for her for the purpose of killing her. He’s allegedly here, the past two weeks. The wicked hem in the righteous. So that justice is perverted.

### **[Dude, Here’s an Unexpected Answer]**

“Why is the Lord letting all these things happen?” Is the question that Habakkuk is asking God. This is the issue. This is the question: Lord, where are you here? Where are you? This is the question. And the Lord being God, he chooses not to be silent here, he responds, “Dude, dude, here is this unexpected answer. Okay? Habakkuk, I got an answer for you buddy.” Habakkuk 1:5, the Lord is speaking now,

“Look at the nations and watch— [now be reading this and pausing just to explain a few things here. So the Lord is saying, **Look at the nations and watch,**]

and be utterly amazed. [Why?]

For I am going to do something in your days

that you would not believe,

even if you were told. [In other words, Habakkuk, I’m about to blow your mind! And it will be on your day, and you would see it. I’m about to *blow your mind*, dude! Watch this! How so?

**For I am going to do something in your days that you would not believe even if you were told.** Verse six...]



I am raising up the Babylonians,”

Let me pause there. I am raising up the who? So at this point, Habakkuk is like, “What?” It’s like God saying, “I am raising up ISIS. Exactly. I am raising up ISIS.” Yes, who are the Babylonians? They were known back then. The Babylonians were known, they were a cruel. They were nastier than ISIS. They were proud, they were arrogant, they were vicious. And they would come to a city, and they would take the city. They were so powerful they would come and take a city. And if they found that city was not submissive to them, and the people are trying to resist a little bit, if they sniffed a little bit of rebellion in the city, they would decapitate people and bring their heads and put them right in the middle of the city—to remind people: anyone who tries to resist, *this* will happen to them. These are the Babylonians. And they would come to the leaders of the city, the mayors, the king, whoever the leader is, they would poke their eyes out, put a hook through their jaw and drag them out of the city. These were the Babylonians. So now, imagine if you’re Habakkuk, and you’re talking to God, and God says, Habakkuk 1:5-11,

“For I am going to do something in your days  
that you would not believe,  
even if you were told. [Right.]  
I am raising up the Babylonians,  
that ruthless and impetuous people,  
who sweep across the whole earth  
to seize dwellings not their own.  
They are a feared and dreaded people;  
they are a law to themselves  
and promote their own honor.  
Their horses are swifter than leopards,  
fiercer than wolves at dusk. [Just think about those images.]  
Their cavalry gallops headlong;  
their horsemen come from afar.  
They fly like an eagle swooping to devour;  
they all come intent [**they all come intent**] on violence. [Question, what was he praying  
about? Lord I cry: Violence! And you do not save! And now God’s answer, “Yeah, more  
violence.”]  
Their hordes advance like a desert wind  
and gather prisoners like sand.  
They mock kings  
and scoff at rulers.  
They laugh at all fortified cities;  
by building earthen ramps they capture them.  
Then they sweep past like the wind and go on—  
guilty people, whose own strength is their god.”





This is the people. This is the tool, this is the vehicle that God—this is the answer that God is bringing to Habakkuk. Lord, how long? How long? How long? Guess what? I'm bringing ISIS to you, dude. Really? What? Lord, are you serious here? This is mind blowing isn't it. Mind blowing to Habakkuk himself, it's destroying all our previous categories—categories that we've been creating to define who God is. Would God do such a thing? Mhm. He would. He says...he would. Is this how God works? Is this how God works? You'll be asking.

So let me give you an example. A biblical example here. John the Baptist, so many of you know John the Baptist. He's the one who's crying out in the wilderness saying, you know, "Repent! Repent! The Messiah's coming. Repent! Repent! The Messiah's coming! Repent, repent! The Messiah's coming!" Right? And so John sees Jesus, and he points, and he tells all the disciples who are with him, "Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world! There he is! Whose sandals I am not fit to tie up. That one! There he is!" So John is going about, preaching, and he's preaching the gospel. If you want to know exactly what he's saying, go to Luke 3. My goodness, he is so blunt with his proclamation of the gospel. But one of the things he does is he goes and he pokes the eye of Herod. King Herod. Why? King Herod was the wicked king. And Herod had gone and seduce his brother's wife and took her for himself. It's a wicked act. The brother is still alive. The brother had a beautiful wife, Herod decides, "Ahh... she is mine!" Because he could. And so John comes and says, "Dude, come on. This is a wicked thing before God! What are you thinking?" Herod got upset and so was his new wife. So what do they do? They throw John in prison. So now John is wallowing in prison, okay?

Now jump to Luke 7. In Luke 7, Jesus is busy doing all sorts of things. He's walking around and he's healing the sick. So we have this centurion's servant, the centurion this is a Roman soldier whose servant is sick. So the Roman soldier sends to a delegation to Jesus saying, "Jesus why don't you just heal this man's servant." So Jesus is on the way, but the Roman soldier says, "You know what, let me send more servants ahead to tell Jesus, 'Jesus I am a Roman. I am a filthy man, like you're not even worth coming to my house. So you just say the word wherever you are, and I know my servant will be healed.'" Jesus is like, "Done." And the man is healed! And then Jesus is walking around, this funeral procession happening, this widow who is crying and her son is being carried and the son is going to be buried, and Jesus has mercy on this lady, comes, touches the bier that is carrying the corpse and commands the young man to come alive. So he's raised someone from the dead. What in the world!

So now, John's disciples who are out, go back to prison when they are visiting John and say, "Hey man! Guess what Jesus is doing. Man he can heal people at a distance! At Chilliwack! You're sick in Chilliwack, Jesus in Abbotsford, he can heal you! Man! And someone was dead and Jesus brought them back to life! This is amazing!" And John is in prison because John was saying "Hey, the Messiah is coming! The Messiah is coming! Repent!" For John is not there thinking, "Jesus is out there, doing stuff, I'm in prison. but I've been preaching about him. Surely he would remember me! Why am I still in the chains here?" So John sends his two disciples and say, "Hey, go to Jesus and tell him, ask him, 'Is he the one to come?' Because surely if he's the Messiah, he'll come and take me out of here. He'll come and save me. He will somehow get me off these chains!" Disciples of John come to Jesus say, "Hey Jesus, John sent us. We are not coming out of our own volition. John sent us and we are here to



ask you, are you... are you the one who's to come...Or should we wait for another Messiah?" Jesus affirms to these two disciples, "Hey I am the one to come. Make no mistake. There is no other Messiah coming. It's me. It's all me, dude. All me okay? There's no other Messiah." But what is remarkable here is what Jesus says in Luke 7:23, after Jesus has told the disciples of John "Go tell John I'm the Messiah.", Luke 7:23,

"Blessed is the one who does not turn away because of me."

Other translations will say, "Blessed is the one who does not fall away" or "who is not offended" "Blessed is the one who does not stumble on the account of me". "Blessed is the one who is not offended." See, in John's mind, "Lord, if you're here, if you're here...and you're walking around and you're doing stuff, and I'm in prison, come on. Get these chains off of me so we can do ministry together! So that we can proclaim the gospel. So that I can tell people who you truly are!" In John's mind, this is how we should do things. And Jesus is like, "Blessed is the one who's not offended by me. John, it's not your agenda, it's my agenda." Jesus continues to do ministry. What happens to John? [pause] Right. John was decapitated. While Jesus was busy doing ministry. Why? Why? And Jesus' response, "Blessed is the one who does not turn away. It is my agenda. Not yours. It's my way. Not yours."

So what do we do here? How do we live godly lives amidst storms that we don't understand? How do we live our lives amidst storms that we don't understand? Now I'll just jump into next week's sermon for just one second and jump out. So look at verse twelve of chapter one. Habakkuk 1:12. There's a rhetorical question there: "Aren't you the everlasting one? Aren't you the everlasting God?" In other words, what Habakkuk is asking God in this dialogue, it's kind of like saying "You know, I thought you were God. Like, why would you do this? I thought you were God!" Many of us would be asking that same question. Jesus is saying, "Blessed is the one who does not fall away on account of me."

How do we live? How do we live godly lives when the storms come? Three things that I'd like us to remember. Three.

First, remember the promise of eternal life. Remember the gospel. It does not end here. Your story does not end here. Even when things go sideways on this side of eternity, it doesn't mean that your story ends here. Your story's not over. Jesus will come back again. And he will make all things new. He will bring true justice. He will set captives free. He will right wrongs, when he comes back again. Remember the gospel. Now I don't know what your story is, might be barrenness while you wait, it might be my story, waiting "Lord how long will my dad wallow in alcoholism? How long will my mom put up with this kind of shame and poverty? How long?" It will, the story is not over yet. Remember the gospel. The story is not over yet. Jesus promises life on the other side. Life to its fullest. But Jesus does not promise an easy life on this side of eternity. He didn't. He didn't promise it will be easy for you on this side of eternity. He *did* promise that things will be well for you on the other side.





Secondly, remember that the Lord will never forsake his own. Ever. It may *feel* like you're alone, it might *feel* like you're abandoned, you might not *feel* that God is close to you. But God never abandons his own. You see, Habakkuk, God said, "Hey I'll raise up the Babylonians." Now the Babylonians—they hadn't come yet, they hadn't come yet. God is saying, "They are coming. This ruthless impetuous people. They are coming. And you'll know them. You know how crazy these people are! and the idolatry that they will bring, and the violence they will bring and the things they'll do to your women and children." Good Lord! The Babylonians *did* come. They destroyed the nation. And they took a majority of them to exile. They marched them to exile. But as the nation of Israel was going to exile, this is what God said to them, through the mouth of Jeremiah, and a verse that many of you like. But the context of this verse was this is a nation that was big and wicked, and God was judging them using this wicked, more wicked nation Babylon, and now they are going to exile being punished by God. Jeremiah 29:11-14,

"For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the Lord, [While they are going *in chains* to Babylon. **For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the Lord**] 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. [While you're in Babylon] You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you," declares the Lord, "and will bring you back from captivity. I will gather you from all the nations and places where I have banished you," declares the Lord, 'and will bring you back to the place from which I carried you into exile.'"

God never forgets his people. Never does. Never does. So even when the storm comes, even when the unexplainable comes, God is still there with you.

Finally, remember to ask God to continually fill you with his spirit. Remember to ask God to fill you with his spirit. See, left to your own devices, to your own devices, you cannot—you cannot live a life that is worthy before God. You can't. Left to your own devices... you can't. You can't. You need God's divine help to endure the storms that he may bring into your life. Why does he bring those storms? We never know. But get this, when he was saying to Habakkuk, "I will raise up the Babylonians." And Habakkuk is like, "What in the world is going on? That's the crazy people!" And the nation is now taken to Babylon. Do you know when you read that Bible history, what you see, well the nation of Israel went to Babylon and they were scattered among the nations; not all of them came back to Israel, to the promised land. Some did, others remained in the nation that they were scattered in Babylon. Fast forward many years later Jesus comes, dies, rises again, the early church begins. And Paul begins his journey in the book of Acts, and he goes to various cities, and he finds Jewish synagogues there. How did those synagogues get there? Because of the Babylonians taking the nation of Israel from their homeland into captivity. And when Paul comes, he begins to preach and he also finds other Gentiles who already very interested in Yahweh the God of Israel. And Christianity began to spread like wildfire. God saw the long game. Habakkuk saw the short game.



So you and I may not see. You and I may not see what God's plan and purpose is in creating some crazy things that are happening in our lives. But God sees. God sees and God knows. So remember the promise of eternal life. And the next time, the next time you take communion, remember, that your story's not over yet. Remember the gospel. Next, God will never forsake you. He will never forsake you. In fact, ask him to fill you with the Spirit that you may endure the crazy times that he may throw to you. Let's pray.

Father, I thank you for this opportunity given us to interact with your word. Lord, I pray, Father, you know the challenges, and the struggle from the difficulties we all face. And, Lord, you bring all sorts of storms our way. But, Lord, I thank you that even when the storms are there, we can remember that our story's not done yet. Even when it collapses on this side of eternity. Lord, your story is not done yet. Lord, that you never forsake us. And so, Father, we pray, fill us with your Spirit that we may suffer well for the sake of the gospel. Thank you again, Father, for the brief moments you've given us to interact with your word. In Jesus' name, and God's people say "Amen".