

## **Nabi Habakkuk, questioning God** by Willem Hekman

Habakkuk is called a prophet (Nabi). The Hebrew word Nabi means “speaker”. But Habakkuk was no ordinary prophet. Usually the prophet’s function was to speak to men for God. To proclaim God’s will for present and future.

With Habakkuk we see the reverse, he speaks to God for men.

He is questioning God and there are 3 main questions:

### **1. Why did God permit the increasing evil in Judah to go unpunished?**

Why is God doing nothing? Why is He silent? This is a classic problem with many people who are suffering, here in Ambon and in Poso but also in China, Saudi, North Korea and other areas where the Church is suffering so much.

“Why do you make me look at injustice?” 1:3

“Why do you tolerate wrong?” 1:3

If God is just and sovereign, why do the righteous suffer, while the wicked prosper?

### **2. Why could a holy God justify using the Babylonians, a people more wicked than the Jews to punish the Jews?**

“Why do you tolerate the treacherous?” 1:13

“Why are you silent while the wicked swallow up those more righteous than themselves?” 1:13

He cannot understand how a righteous God can use Barbarians to execute judgment upon a people more righteous than they. In this he is also speaking in behalf of suffering Christians everywhere.

### **3. How long O Lord must I call for help, but you do not listen? 1:2**

The prophet has cried out but it seems that God does not hear their cry. Therefore he questions God. Why is God doing nothing? How long do I need to pray? How long do we have to wait for help? This is the same question raised by thousands of Christians every day in Ambon, North Korea, China, Vietnam and other nations where the Christian suffer persecution at the hands of evil men. Some even think they do God’s will by killing the Christians.

Many think it is utter audacious and foolish to question God. Some tell us “Don’t question God”, “He knows best” or they may quote Romans 8:28, “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose”. They may say, “Why question God?” “Have Faith!”, “Trust in God”. Some may even make you feel guilty when questioning God. “Who are you to question God?” “God’s ways are not our ways”. However this position and attitude is shown to be false by the inclusions of Job and Habakkuk’s complaints in the Bible. If you need further proof go to Calvary where we hear the Lord Jesus Christ cry out to God His Father in a loud voice saying in Aramaic: “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? Meaning “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me”.

I believe that it is probably more wrong to say nothing about sincere doubts than to express them and find an answer and a clue to the meaning of life.

### **God respects the questions of Nabi Habakkuk and begins to answer in 1:5.**

He explains to Habakkuk "I know what's going on and I am working. Don't lose faith Habakkuk!"

"Look at the nations and watch and be utterly amazed. For I am going to do something in your days that you would not believe, even if you were told." Then God proceeds to explain to the prophet what He is going to do. It seems unbelievable to him what God is going to do. He had already witnessed the complete integration of all moral laws and standards in his country. The righteous were oppressed. The people were living in open sin. They were worshipping idols. They were oppressing the poor. I am sure Habakkuk realized that this sin was leading to an invasion of Jerusalem by a strong enemy. God's answer horrified Habakkuk. Everything was already in ruins around the prophet and now God is telling Habakkuk that the Chaldeans are coming to utterly destroy whatever is left. They use a scorch earth policy. It seems that Habakkuk does understand why all this suffering, punishment and destruction will take place.

"Your eyes are too pure to look on evil, you cannot tolerate wrong" 1:13

There are 5 "woes" mentioned by Habakkuk or 5 national sins:

1. to become wealthy by corruption and extortion
2. to become wealthy by cheating others
3. to become wealthy by killing and committing other crimes
4. alcohol and drug addiction
5. to worship idols instead of worshipping the living God

We are seeing all 5 "woes" make advances in our own countries. I was utterly amazed when listening to a Senate Finance Commission in the United States recently questioning a wealthy businessman, an auditor from a top auditing firm and an expert in the stock market. They were covering up for one another's cheating, lying and corruption. The wealthy businessman who had cheated the public by publishing false reports causing scores of people to lose their entire life's savings and having almost 20,000 of his employees lose their jobs, was not even man enough to answer the questions of the committee because the answers would incriminate him. The corruption here in Indonesia is no match for what we are witnessing in corporate America these days!

God does admit the wickedness of the Chaldeans but declares that they will destroy themselves finally by their own evil. Pride, cheating and cruelty always bring destruction. Sometimes people have to wait to know what the final outcome will be. God sometimes takes years and ages to show His plan. Yes, the Chaldeans seemed to prosper for a time but they are doomed. The Bible says that "the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life." Doom and destruction will surely come to all the enemies of God.

From the book of Habakkuk we learn that we can only see a small part of God's plan at one time. We must wait for God to reveal His entire program. God is in control of the universe and He is working His own purpose in His own time. This includes His plans for Ambon, North Korea, the Muslim world and the remaining Communist nations such as China, Vietnam etc. We also learn that we must trust implicitly in God.

In the midst of all the trouble, confusion and suffering there is the golden text of the entire book of Habakkuk, "The just shall live by faith". A living faith in the living God determines our conduct and attitude. Habakkuk did not sulk. He did not give up. He accepted God's answers. Listen to what he says in conclusion: "Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior. The sovereign Lord is my strength; He makes my feet like the feet of deer, He enables me to go on the heights." Faith gives us joy, guidance and stability. Faith gives us Victory in the end. The devil and all his agents are doomed to hell and there is no way out!

Recently we had a young man share his testimony at Calvary Life Fellowship in Jakarta where I serve as pastor. His name was Bronson. The militant Muslims attacked him in his hometown in Ambon. His head was cut open in 2 places, his right eye jerked out, his face was torn open and his jaw bones broken and smashed. The side of his body cut open. Then he was dragged for about 50 meters behind a vehicle. But somehow he survived this ordeal! He has spent months in the hospital and he has already had 13 operations.

It was quite amazing to hear his testimony praising and thanking God for life. No complaining, grumbling or bitterness. There was a note of joy and faith in God. In closing Bronson said that men makes plans but it is God who determines and makes the final decisions. He requested prayer that somehow God may use him in the future. Praise the Name of the Lord.