

35-01-01 The Whys of the Wise Person  
faith, theodicy, why, questions

Hab. 1: 1-2:1

Faith is not destroyed but strengthened through “why” questions.

### INTRODUCTION:

–What is *theodicy* (not Homer’s *The Odyssey*) [“*argument in defense of God’s goodness despite the existence of evil*”] (whole book of Job is one)

–Who is Habakkuk? (an officially recognized “prophet”—no guarantee to fame, but he did get his poem published...)

–**v.1** “*massa*,” a *burden*, a *song* (excellent Hebrew poetry, used as part of a worship service, singing a *theodicy*, to ask “why” questions)

–**title**: When our faith moves us to question God, His answer often raises greater questions requiring greater faith. Chapter 1 helps us to see how our struggles with “why” questions can help faith grow stronger.

In fact, **HOM.idea**, because...

### **I. Faith begins the “Why” Question**

A. Habakkuk believed the Lord is a God Who:

1. *answers prayer*, **v.2a** (or, why ask?) (Time meets Eternity in prayer) (T/P=F; Time/Prayer=Faith, Faith increases with time.)
2. *saves (delivers)*, **v.2b** (Carl Disney’s FAITH-WORKOUT)
3. *is holy*, **v.3a** (injustice and wrongdoing would concern Him)
4. *desires peace and community*, **v.3b** (CHURCH, HEAVEN)
5. *does not change* (no real “why” w\ PAGAN GODS, no *theodicy*)
  - a. The believer’s “why” reveals a stable trust in God’s character.
  - b. The skeptic’s “if” shows unbelief (IF GOD exists, THEN why).

B. Habakkuk believed that God’s standards (His Law) were right, **v.4**

1. The *distant past*—Justice under DAVID (“I love your law...”)
2. The *recent past*—Corruption, then JOSIAH (Torah found)
3. The *present regime*--the law “*numb*” (limbs needs NERVE!)  
“WHY, O LORD, WHY?”

**TRANS:** the **TITLE**. . . Habakkuk wasn’t just a wise person by virtue of his official position. He was a wise person because he approached God in faith to ask “why?” We’ve seen how His “whys” began in faith. They were spoken in faith because he expected an answer. This leads

into the next point: **Faith is not destroyed but strengthened through “why” questions** because...

### **II. God Hears Our “Whys” and Responds, v.5-11, however,**

A. We may not be ready for His answer

1. It’s too startling, **v.5a** (CHANGE of SCENERY --“vision”)
2. It challenges our level of faith, **v.5b** (A-BOMB vs. H-BOMB)

B. We may have expect another kind of answer.

1. Habakkuk probably reflected on JOSIAH’s reforms.
2. (BABYLON?) Can God use the evil of Satan to bring good?

**TRANS:** God hears our “whys” and responds, but it may only lead to further “why” questions. God’s answer perplexed Habakkuk, but it didn’t damage his faith. It only spurred it on, which leads into our third point. **Faith is not destroyed but strengthened through “why” questions**, because...

### **III. Faith Maintains Dialogue in the Face of Mystery (PARADOX)**

A. Faith knows HOW TO maintain debate with the Most High,

1. PRAISE Him: “*are you not from everlasting?*”
2. Remind Him of His covenant promises: “*we will not die.*”
3. Use respectful but strategic names:
  - a. “*LORD*,” (Yahweh)—covenant name (Mr. GOD vs. I AM),
  - b. “*My God*,”—because it’s a personal and friendly debate,
  - c. “*Holy One*”—because holiness is a key issue.
  - d. “*O Rock*”—special, because it brings up two of God’s roles:
    - (1) Ps.144:1-2, “Praise beto the LORD my Rock, who trains my hands for war, my fingers for battle. He is my loving God and my fortress, my stronghold and my deliverer, my shield, in whom I take refuge, who subdues peoples under me.”
    - (2) Deut.32:4, “He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he.”
4. Rephrase what He just told you (in contrast with the NAMES) (Perhaps Habakkuk used INFLECTION?)

B. Faith holds reason’s perplexity in tension:

1. What reason sees: (A CURE worse than the DISEASE)
  - a. Reason sees an imbalance: the *relatively good* vs. the *really bad* (SICK CHURCH vs. SECULAR HUMANISM)

- b. Reason sees the plight of the victim: the pillaging of the KING of BABYLON (ADDICTIONS & DEMONIC SLAVERY)
  - c. Reason sees the suffering of the innocent: who already suffer (KIDS & DIVORCE vs. KIDS & LAWLESSNESS)
2. What reason doesn't see:
- a. The disease may be worse than expected. (NEWS about the CAR, "GET A NEW ONE!")
  - b. God's explanation is beyond our capacity to handle, (GOD ANSWERS JOB, and ASLAN ANSWERS ARAVIS)
- C. Faith puts an "ellipsis mark" at the end of its theodicy...
- 1. The believer takes a stand on the promises, v.2:1 (on the LOOKOUT)
  - 2. The believer awaits God's reply, but prays with his eyes open

### CONCLUSION:

–The fool's question and that of the Wise person ... **Faith is not destroyed but strengthened through "why" questions.**

–Faith waits on God, to "see what the LORD will say."

–Faith speaks out, writes out, the "*burden*" for the COMMUNITY

–Paul's quoted v.5 in his warning the Jews to reject the Gospel message: in their case, THE DISEASE OF self-righteous UNBELIEF was so bad that the CURE was for God Himself to die. Unbelievable. Yet the only way for us to be saved. Have you taken advantage of the CURE that was in the CROSS?

### **Habakkuk 1:1-2:1 (NIV)**

1 The oracle that Habakkuk the prophet received.

2 How long, O LORD, must I call for help, but you do not listen? Or cry out to you, "Violence!" but you do not save?

3 Why do you make me look at injustice? Why do you tolerate wrong? Destruction and violence are before me; there is strife, and conflict abounds.

4 Therefore the law is paralyzed, and justice never prevails. The wicked hem in the righteous, so that justice is perverted.

5 "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.

6 I am raising up the Babylonians, that ruthless and impetuous people, who sweep across the whole earth to seize dwelling places not their own.

7 They are a feared and dreaded people; they are a law to themselves and promote their own honor.

8 Their horses are swifter than leopards, fiercer than wolves at dusk. Their cavalry gallops headlong; their horsemen come from afar. They fly like a vulture swooping to devour;

9 they all come bent on violence. Their hordes advance like a desert wind and gather prisoners like sand.

10 They deride kings and scoff at rulers. They laugh at all fortified cities; they build earthen ramps and capture them.

11 Then they sweep past like the wind and go on—guilty men, whose own strength is their god."

12 O LORD, are you not from everlasting? My God, my Holy One, we will not die. O LORD, you have appointed them to execute judgment; O Rock, you have ordained them to punish.

13 Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrong. Why then do you tolerate the treacherous? Why are you silent while the wicked swallow up those more righteous than themselves?

14 You have made men like fish in the sea, like sea creatures that have no ruler.

15 The wicked foe pulls all of them up with hooks, he catches them in his net, he gathers them up in his dragnet; and so he rejoices and is glad.

16 Therefore he sacrifices to his net and burns incense to his dragnet, for by his net he lives in luxury and enjoys the choicest food.

17 Is he to keep on emptying his net, destroying nations without mercy?

I will stand at my watch and station myself on the ramparts; I will look to see what he will say to me, and what answer I am to give to this complaint.