

## HOME GROUP QUESTIONS FROM SERMON 23rd June 2024

### A Spiritual Journey – Staying on Track”

#### Habakkuk (English Standard Version)

##### Chapter 1 *Habakkuk's Complaint*

1 The oracle that Habakkuk the prophet saw. 2 O Lord, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not hear? Or cry to you “Violence!” and you will not save? 3 Why do you make me see iniquity, and why do you idly look at wrong? Destruction and violence are before me; strife and contention arise. 4 So the law is paralysed, and justice never goes forth. For the wicked surround the righteous; so justice goes forth perverted.

##### *The Lord's Answer*

5 “Look among the nations and see; wonder and be astounded. For I am doing a work in your days that you would not believe if told. 6 For behold, I am raising up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, who march through the breadth of the earth, to seize dwellings not their own. 7 They are dreaded and fearsome; their justice and dignity go forth from themselves.

##### *Habakkuk's Second Complaint*

12 Are you not from everlasting, O Lord my God, my Holy One? We shall not die. O Lord, you have ordained them as a judgment, and you, O Rock, have established them for reproof. 13 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?

##### Chapter 2 *The Righteous Shall Live by His Faith*

1 I will take my stand at my watch post 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. 2 And the Lord answered me: “Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so he may run who reads it. 3 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. 4 “Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright within him, but the righteous shall live by his faith.

5 “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.”

##### *Woe to the Chaldeans*

6 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!” 7 Will not your debtors suddenly arise, and those awake who will make you tremble? Then you will be spoil for them. 8 Because you have plundered many nations, all the remnant of the peoples shall plunder you, for the blood of man and violence to the earth, to cities and all who dwell in them.

##### Chapter 3 *Habakkuk's Prayer*

1 A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet, according to Shigionoth. 2 O Lord, I have heard the report of you, and your work, O Lord, do I fear. In the midst of the years revive it; in the midst of the years make it known; in wrath remember mercy. 3 God came from Teman,

and the Holy One from Mount Paran. Selah. His splendour covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise. 4 His brightness was like the light; rays flashed from his hand; and there he veiled his power. 5 Before him went pestilence, and plague followed at his heels. 6 He stood and measured the earth; he looked and shook the nations; then the eternal mountains were scattered; the everlasting hills sank low. His were the everlasting ways. 7 I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction; the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble. 8 Was your wrath against the rivers, O Lord? Was your anger against the rivers, or your indignation against the sea, when you rode on your horses, on your chariot of salvation? 9 You stripped the sheath from your bow, calling for many arrows. Selah. You split the earth with rivers. 10 The mountains saw you and writhed; the raging waters swept on; the deep gave forth its voice; it lifted its hands on high. 11 The sun and moon stood still in their place at the light of your arrows as they sped, at the flash of your glittering spear. 12 You marched through the earth in fury; you threshed the nations in anger. 13 You went out for the salvation of your people, for the salvation of your anointed. You crushed the head of the house of the wicked, laying him bare from thigh to neck. Selah. 14 You pierced with his own arrows the heads of his warriors, who came like a whirlwind to scatter me, rejoicing as if to devour the poor in secret. 15 You trampled the sea with your horses, the surging of mighty waters. 16 I hear, and my body trembles; my lips quiver at the sound; rottenness enters into my bones; my legs tremble beneath me. Yet I will quietly wait for the day of trouble to come upon people who invade us.

*Habakkuk Rejoices in the Lord*

17 Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, 18 yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will take joy in the God of my salvation. 19 God, the Lord, is my strength; he makes my feet like the deer's; he makes me tread on my high places. To the choirmaster: with stringed instruments

These questions relate to the sermon (10.30 service) on Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2024 (available on the church website).

Feel free to pick and choose questions / sub-questions as appropriate for your group's interest, preferred study style and time available. They are simply there to facilitate good discussion / reflection. Do not feel you must go through all of them.

(1) Opening Icebreaker. Think of a time when you've felt your world is falling apart or you've felt overwhelmed with troubles (e.g. family, health, financial, emotional).

(a) How did you respond and tried to cope? What did it do for your faith?

(2) Spiritual Journey: Stage 1: From Seeking God ... about his Plight. Habakkuk goes on a spiritual journey over the course of the Book, and in the process lives out the two meanings of his name in Hebrew – to wrestle and to embrace

(a) First, how is Habakkuk's world falling apart (Ch1v1-4)?

(b) How would you characterise Habakkuk's response (first in Ch 1v1-4 and then in v12-13 after God initial's response) and what does this tell us about his relationship with and understanding of God?

(c) What might this tell us about how we should respond when troubles strike and our underlying relationship with and understanding of God?

(3) God's response. God responds to Habakkuk's complaints and seething but not as Habakkuk expected or wanted.

- (a) How does God respond (Ch 1 v5-7)?
- (b) What does God's response tell us about the character and ways of God, and what might be the implications of this for how we live?
- (c) How do you respond when God's actions are not as you expected or hoped for? Do you stay focused on God or feel tempted to run away or give up on God?

**(4) Spiritual Journey: Stage 2: To Seeing God's Perspective ... in his Plight. Despite being perplexed by God's answers, Habakkuk does not give up on God. He moves on to stage 2 of his spiritual journey. He keeps the needle in his spiritual compass pointed towards God and tracks this.**

- (a) What does Habakkuk do (Ch 2 v1)? How does this compare with how you might respond? Why is Habakkuk such a good example here?
- (b) What might 'standing at our watch post and on our tower' mean and look like for us?
- (c) How does God respond (Ch2 v2-8)?
- (d) How do you understand God's statement in Ch 2 v4 that the righteous shall live by faith? What does to 'live by faith' mean to you?
- (e) What benefits does Habakkuk receive from God's response in Ch 2 v2-8? And how might this help explain his ultimate rejoicing in the Lord in Chapter 3?
- (f) Think of times when you have waited on the Lord in times of distress or uncertainty. What difference did it make?

**(5) Spiritual Journey: Stage 3: To Singing Praises to God ... despite his Plight. Although Habakkuk's immediate circumstances haven't changed at all, we find him rejoicing / singing praises to God at the end of the Book. He now lives out the other meaning of his name – to embrace – by embracing God.**

- (a) What further critical thing does Habakkuk do in Ch 3 v1-15 that strengthens his faith even more and enables him to rejoice in the Lord in Ch 3 v17-19?
- (b) What is it exactly that Habakkuk rejoices in and does not rejoice in? Consider the true meaning of Ch 2 v4 as you reflect on this.
- (c) Why might rejoicing in the Lord be so beneficial even when our immediate circumstances look bleak? Think of other biblical examples (e.g. Apostle Paul in prison in Acts 16 v25-35)?
- (d) Are there times when you have chosen to rejoice in the Lord like this despite adverse circumstances? How did it feel and how did it help?
- (e) To what extent do you think you need to go through stages 1 and 2 before you can fully embrace stage 3?

**(6) Final Reflection.**

- (a) After looking at Habakkuk's spiritual journey over the course of the Book, what would you say are the key insights about how he copes with bleak times and what does this mean now for your own walk with the Lord? What changes might you make?