

## God, I Have a Complaint

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### Scripture (NIV)

Habakkuk 2:20, 'The LORD is in his holy temple; let all the earth be silent before him.'

Habakkuk 3:17 – 19, 'Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, 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 a deer, he enables me to tread on the heights. For the director of music. On my stringed instruments.'

### Introduction

Jan Spies told a story, '*Profeet met 'n blik kondensmelk.*' With the receipt of the 1933 Afrikaans translation of the Bible, a dominee decided to creatively introduce the translation. You can watch Jan Spies' story here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LldSUSGVdCQ>.

The dominee decided to get as many people involved as possible. At the end of the day, he had 66 children involved, in other words, for every Book of the Bible, there was a child.

The dominee would be behind the curtains and he would read out a Book name, and the child would appear and take his or her place on the stage. So if the dominee called 'Genesis,' then a child would appear wearing a scarf with the label 'Genesis.' And so the dominee regularly worked with the children – each child knew that his or her place was behind another child, and so they practiced and practiced, without the scarfs because they must be kept clean. What could possibly go wrong?

The story goes that when the children eventually wore their scarfs, some were more impressed than others. Psalms and Daniel had little complaints while Jeremiah and Samuel were less impressed. One child, Habakkuk, was terribly upset about the possibility that Habakkuk would accompany him through life...Habakkuk van der Merwe. So Habakkuk van der Merwe used a tin of condensed milk to swop scarfs, and so, motivated by a tin of condensed milk, a whole lot of name swopping happened; Habakkuk travelled far.

Dominee called for, for example, Daniel, and 1 John appeared and took his place on stage. He called Matthew and Exodus took his place on stage, and the very last child was Revelation, wearing Habakkuk's scarf, with a tin of condensed milk.

## **Big Questions**

Actually, Habakkuk is a very interesting book. Habakkuk asked God, in 2 conversations why:

- He allows crime?
- Do the wicked prosper?
- Is there a lack of justice?
- Is He silent in times of disaster?

Well, he didn't really ask God; he complained to God.

The Greek word translated to 'complainer' literally means, 'one who is discontented with his lot in life.' Complaint is not a fruit of the spirit and is harmful to peace, joy and patience. In addition to Habakkuk, Adam, Moses, David, and some of the prophets all complained to God. Let me clarify, when we complain to God we also have to rest in His solutions, advice and purposes. In this sense, instead of complaining, rather pray. If you must complain, complain about yourself to God so that He will forgive and cleanse us and put within us a new heart, one that rejoices rather than complains.

### **The 3 Parts of Habakkuk**

Habakkuk is divided into 3 parts; (1) watch and see, (2) stand and see and (3) kneel and see.

#### **Watch and See**

Habakkuk complained to God:

- Habakkuk 1:2 'O LORD, how long must I call for help before you listen, before you save us from violence?
- Habakkuk 1:3 Why do you make me see such trouble? How can you stand to look on such wrongdoing? Destruction and violence are all around me, and there is fighting and quarreling everywhere.
- Habakkuk 1:4 The law is weak and useless, and justice is never done. Evil people get the better of the righteous, and so justice is perverted.'

God's reply starting in verse 5 upset Habakkuk 'Keep watching the nations around you, and you will be astonished at what you see. I am going to do something that you will not believe when you hear about it.' The rest of God's reply is in verses 6-11; you can read it there.

Habakkuk could not understand how God could allow an enemy to punish His people. So he complained again (verses 12-17). Some highlights...

- You have chosen the Babylonians and made them strong so that they can punish us.
- So why are you silent while they destroy people who are more righteous than they are?
- How can you treat people like fish or like a swarm of insects that have no ruler to direct them?
- The Babylonians catch people with hooks, as though they were fish. They drag them off in nets and shout for joy over their catch!
- Are they going to use their swords forever and keep on destroying nations without mercy?

All Habakkuk could do was watch God lift the veil off of the future.

### **Stand and see**

Habakkuk made a decision:

Habakkuk 2:1, 'I will climb my watchtower and wait to see what the LORD will tell me to say and what answer he will give to my complaint.' *'Op my wagtoring wil ek gaan staan en op 'n skansmuur my stel, en ek wil speur om te sien wat Hy in my sal spreek, en wat ek op my klagte moet antwoord.'*

God's replied to Habakkuk, some highlights,

- Write down clearly on tablets what I reveal to you, so that it can be read at a glance.
- It is not yet time for it to come true.
- Those who are evil will not survive, but those who are righteous will live because they are faithful to God.

The heart of Habakkuk is chapter 2 verse 4: It was this verse that started Martin Luther off toward Reformation:

- 'And this is the message: "Those who are evil will not survive, but those who are righteous will live because they are faithful to God."'

- *‘Kyk, sy siel is opgeblase in hom en nie reg nie. Maar die regverdige, deur sy geloof sal hy lewe.’*

And then we arrive at a beautiful verse, 2:20 ‘The LORD is in his holy Temple; let everyone on earth be silent in his presence.’ *‘Maar die HERE is in sy heilige tempel—swyg voor Hom, o ganse aarde!’*

### **Kneel and see**

Habakkuk prays sincerely from verses 2 to 16, I want to highlight verse 2, ‘O LORD, I have heard of what you have done, and I am filled with awe. Now do again in our times the great deeds you used to do. Be merciful, even when you are angry.

- God’s glory appears
- God always responds to a cry of help from His people
- Habakkuk realizes that God is in control and that He is working His own purposes in His own time.
- Habakkuk learns that he can trust God fully

### **Conclusion**

Look around, what do you see and how do you feel about it? Is there much difference between what you see and what Habakkuk saw? What are you going to do about what you see?

Let me encourage you,

- *God regeer al is daar wrede magte wat doen wat hulle wil. Hoe moed, God is in beheer!* God still rules, even though there are cruel forces doing whatever they want. Be encouraged because God is in control!
- *Geloof in God leer die gelowige om te sê “nogtans.” Al gaan dit swaar en al lyk dit of die onregverdiges doen net wat hulle wil, kan die gelowige sterk wees en selfs jubel, want hulle het die oortuiging dat God sal ingryp. God is groter as enige mag!* Through faith in God, we can say ‘despite.’ Even when times are not treating us well and it looks as if the unrighteous are doing whatever they want, we can stand strong and joyfully take heart because we have assurance that God will intervene.
- *Die wat glo in die Here sal uit en deur hulle geloof lewe.* Those who believe in God can live by and through faith.

