

# Faith Under Fire

## Lesson 11: When God Says Wait: Trusting His Timing -- Habakkuk 3:17-19

Habakkuk did not begin his book singing. He began it arguing. He looked out over his nation and saw violence, injustice, and corruption going unchecked, and he cried out to God the oldest question of the suffering faithful: “How long, O Lord?” How long will I cry for help, and you will not hear? When God answered that He was raising up the Babylonians to bring judgment, Habakkuk was more troubled, not less, because the cure looked worse than the disease. The whole book is a wrestling match between a confused prophet and the God whose timing and methods he cannot understand. And that is what makes its final words so astonishing.

By the last chapter, Habakkuk has not received the answer he wanted. The Babylonians are still coming. The hard season has not been canceled. Nothing in his circumstances has improved. And yet he ends not with another complaint but with one of the most breathtaking declarations of faith in all of Scripture. He has learned, through the wrestling, to trust God’s timing even when he cannot trace God’s hand, to wait for a salvation he cannot yet see, and to rejoice in God Himself before any of his questions are resolved.

Listen to how he says it: “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.” This is total loss, the ancient picture of an economy and a life collapsing on every side. No harvest, no livestock, no food, no security. Habakkuk names the worst-case scenario in unflinching detail, not to despair over it but to set the stage for the most defiant “yet” in the Bible.

“Yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will take joy in the God of my salvation.” Yet. When everything that can fail has failed, Habakkuk plants his joy in something nothing can touch: the Lord Himself. He does not rejoice because the fig tree blossomed; it did not. He rejoices in God, who remains when every harvest is gone. And then his final word: “God, the Lord, is my strength; he makes my feet like the deer’s; he makes me tread on my high places.” The God he could not understand has become the strength that carries him over the heights. This lesson invites us to learn Habakkuk’s hard-won faith, to trust God’s timing when He says wait, and to find a joy that does not depend on the harvest but on the God who never fails.

**Group Discussion:** Habakkuk wrestled honestly with God’s timing, asking “how long?” and not getting the answer he wanted, yet he ended in worship. What is the difference between waiting on God with bitter resignation and waiting with the kind of trust Habakkuk finally reached? How does a person get from the one to the other?

**Personal Reflection:** Habakkuk learned to rejoice in God “though the fig tree should not blossom,” before any of his circumstances improved. Where in your life are you currently

waiting on God, perhaps longer than you wanted? What would it look like to find your joy in God Himself this week, rather than postponing it until the waiting is over?

*Read Habakkuk 3:17–19*

## **Study Questions**

1. Habakkuk reaches his triumphant faith only after chapters of honest wrestling with God over His timing and methods. Why is it significant that his trust is the fruit of struggle rather than a denial of it, and what does this teach about how genuine faith in God's timing is formed?
2. Think about a season when you wrestled with God over His timing. Did you try to rush past the questions to a tidy resolution, or did you bring your honest struggle to God? How might Habakkuk's example free you to wrestle honestly while still moving toward trust?
3. Habakkuk lists a complete collapse, no figs, no grapes, no olives, no crops, no flock, no herd (v. 17), and yet he does not end in despair. Why does he name the worst-case scenario so specifically, and what does it accomplish to face the full reality of potential loss before declaring his trust?
4. Where are you tempted to manage your fears by refusing to look at them, hoping that not naming the worst will keep it at bay? How might honestly facing a feared loss, as Habakkuk does, actually clear the way for a deeper trust in God?
5. The hinge of the passage is the word "yet": "Yet I will rejoice in the Lord" (v. 18). What is the difference between joy that depends on the fig tree blossoming and joy planted in "the God of my salvation," and why can the second kind survive when the first cannot?

6. Be honest about what your joy is currently tied to. If the “fig trees” in your life failed, your finances, your health, your plans, would your joy collapse with them? What would it look like to begin rooting your joy in God Himself rather than in His gifts?
7. Habakkuk calls God “the God of my salvation” even while the threatened disaster still looms (v. 18). Why does he anchor his rejoicing in God’s salvation rather than in a change of circumstances, and how does the certainty of God’s ultimate salvation steady us while we wait through trials that have not yet lifted?
8. Where are you waiting for circumstances to change before you will let yourself worship or rejoice? How does anchoring in “the God of my salvation” make it possible to rejoice now, in the middle of the unresolved waiting, rather than only after deliverance comes?
9. Habakkuk ends, “God, the Lord, is my strength; he makes my feet like the deer’s; he makes me tread on my high places” (v. 19). Notice the strength is God Himself, and the sure-footedness is His gift. What does this teach about where the believer’s strength to endure actually comes from, and how does this guard against the idea that we must summon endurance from within ourselves?
10. Look back across Habakkuk 3:17-19 as a whole, the honest wrestling, the named losses, the defiant “yet,” and God as strength for the heights. Name one specific area where God is asking you to wait and trust His timing, and one truth about “the God of your salvation” you can plant your joy in while you wait.

## **Now or Later**

Reflect on these passages: Psalm 27:13-14, wait for the Lord; be strong and let your heart take courage; Isaiah 40:31, those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength and mount up with wings like eagles; Lamentations 3:25-26, the Lord is good to those who wait for Him; it is good to wait quietly for His salvation; Romans 8:24-25, in hope we wait with patience for what we do not yet see; Philippians 4:11-13, I have learned in whatever situation to be content, through Him who strengthens me.