



**MT. ROSE REFORMED**  
ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

# The Prophet's Prayer

*Mr. Frank Wang | October 4, 2026 | Habakkuk 1:1-4*

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## Old Testament Reading and Prayer

I will ask you to open your Bible with me to Habakkuk chapter 1, 1 to 14. This is our Old Testament reading and it's also our sermon text for this morning. Let us pray and seek God's blessing of his word.

Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, You spoke long ago to our fathers by the prophets. In these last days, you have spoken to us by your son. We thank you that you have not led us in darkness, but have given us your word, a lamp to our feet and a light to our paths. As we come to the oracle that your servant Habakkuk saw, we confess that by ourselves we cannot rightly understand it. Our minds are dull, our hearts are easily distracted. So we pray with the psalmist, open my eyes that I may behold the wondrous things out of your law. Send your Holy Spirit to enlighten our minds and soften our hearts. Like Habakkuk, we live among violence, strife, and injustice, and we too are tempted to ask, how long, O Lord? Teach us through this passage to bring our burdens and perplexities honestly to you, trusting in your justice, your providence, and your promise. Strengthen your servant who brings your word. Help me to speak it faithfully and clearly. Hide me behind the cross, so that it is not the voice of man, but the voice of the shepherd who has heard. Let this word not return to you empty. By it, convict us of sin, comfort us in Christ, and lead us in a new obedience. For the glory of your name, we ask this in Jesus' name, our Lord. Amen.

The word from Habakkuk, chapter 1, verse 1 to 4. The oracle that Habakkuk the prophet saw. Oh Lord, how long shall I cry for help and you will not hear? I'll cry to you violence and you will not save. Why do you make me see iniquity? Why do you idly look at wrong? destruction and

violence are before me, strife and contention arise, so the law is paralyzed, and justice never goes forth, for the wicked surround the righteous, so justice goes forth perverted.

## **New Testament Reading**

And the New Testament reading is from Romans chapter 1, verse 16 to 17. And now let's turn to Romans chapter 1. For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jews first and also to the Greek. For in it, the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith. For it is written, the righteous shall live by faith. The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of God will stand forever.

## **Introduction to the Sermon**

Now we can turn back to Habakkuk chapter 1.

Since the fall of Adam and Eve, all mankind has been under the wrath and curse of God. Yet out of his mere love, God offered us and saved us by giving his Son, Jesus Christ, and by granting faith and repentance unto life. He has also given us the ordinary means of grace, namely his word, the sacraments, and prayer. Through these, we can receive the benefits of Jesus Christ and his redemption. Prayer is a Christian duty, but sadly, it is also one of the most neglected. Many books have been written to teach us how to pray rightly and fruitfully, but the best teacher is always the Bible itself and the prayer God has recorded in it.

So let me begin with a question. How is your prayer life? Do you pray? If you do, that is wonderful. But do you pray in the right way? And do you pray for the right things? And what should a Christian do in the midst of a chaotic and morally decaying society? Habakkuk helps to answer these questions.

From this passage, I want to show you that Christians should pray to God earnestly and honestly, seeking Him on the basis of His promise and His law. We will consider these three points. First, Habakkuk prayed. Second, Habakkuk prayed in the right way. And third, Habakkuk prayed for the right things.

## **Point 1: Habakkuk Prayed**

The first point Habakkuk prayed is from verse one to the first part of verse three. Prayer is a conversation between man and God, and the two features of these verses make that plain.

Namely, the first one, Habakkuk addressed God directly in verse two. Oh Lord, he's talking to God directly. Secondly, notice the pronouns used. I cry, you will not hear, and why do you? So this is a man having a conversation with God.

This is one of the most noticeable difference between this book and other prophetic books. In the other prophetic books, the prophet is speaking God's word to God's people. But from verse one, we know that the author of this short book is Habakkuk. He was a prophet. These are the words of his dialog with God, but at the same time, since it's recorded in the scripture, it is also the God's word to us. As a prophet, Habakkuk spoke God's word, and he knew what God had taught about a prayer.

Scripture gives at least four reasons why prayer matters. The first reason is prayer is a mark of godly man. After Abel's death, God gave Adam and Eve another son, Seth, to carry on the godly line. Of that line, scripture says, at that time people began to call upon the name of the Lord. That's Genesis 4. This mark continues in the New Testament. When Luke described the centurion, Cornelius, he named the three signs of his godliness. First, he feared God. Second, he gave alms generously. And third, he prayed continually to God. That's Acts chapter 10. Habakkuk is a godly man.

He prayed because he knew that God commands and invites his people to pray. That's a second reason. In 1 Chronicles 16 and Psalm 105, God said, Seek the Lord and his strength. Seek his presence continually. In Amos chapter 5, God even pleads with Israel, seek me and live. Habakkuk obeyed God's command and he prayed.

And there is also a third reason, God promised to hear and answer. Habakkuk prayed in expectation God will answer his prayer as he promised. In 2 Chronicles chapter 7 it says, If my people, God tell Israel, if my people who are called by my name humble themselves and pray and seek my face, I will hear from heaven. And also the same thing in Matthew chapter 7, Jesus said, That means these promise comes all the way to the New Testament time. Ask, and it will be given to you. Seek, and you will find. Knock, it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives. Philippians chapter four teaches that, do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and mind in Christ Jesus.

The fourth reason, God grieves when his people do not pray. In Isaiah chapter 43, God laments, Yet you did not call upon me, O Jacob, And in Hosea chapter seven, none of them calls upon me as God's complaint. As Christians, we see this even more clearly now. In Gethsemane, Jesus was grieved that his disciples would not pray with him. Could you not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. That's Matthew chapter 26.

So come back to my question again. Do you pray? Do you bear this mark of God's people? The Shorter Catechism teaches that God requires of us the diligent use of the outward means whereby Christ communicates to us the benefits of redemption. And prayer is one of those means. You should pray and pray every day. As Paul says, He prayed in everything. Habakkuk prayed. He bore the mark of godly man and also obeying God's command, sincerely expecting God's answer to his prayer.

## **Point 2: Habakkuk Prayed in the Right Way**

Habakkuk not only prayed, he also prayed in the right way. And that comes to our second point. He prayed in the right way. That's from verse two to three.

Prayer is a genuine communication with God. Jeremiah chapter 29 and also Deuteronomy chapter four state the requirement of being genuine. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. Habakkuk prayer was genuine and wholehearted in these three ways.

First, he prayed with faith. He believed in God's providence. See verse three. Why do you make me see iniquity? Habakkuk knew that God governs all things. It was God's will to place him in that time and place as a witness to the corruption around him. He also believed in God's justice. He expected God to hear him, to act, and to set things right.

And secondly, He prayed with honesty. Habakkuk did not hide his perplexity. He could not reconcile God's holy, wise, and powerful providence with God's apparent silence toward the wickedness in Judah. So he told God plainly. It's very straightforward. Look at verse 2. You were not here. you will not save." He complains God's inaction. And in verse 3, why do you idly look at wrong? He cannot understand why God is indifferent to the wrong, to the wicked. And also verse 2 again, how long? He's weary. It has been too long. He has been waiting for God's answer for too long.

And lastly, he prayed persistently and with intensity. The words, how long, tells Habakkuk had brought this burden to God many times. Yet he did not stop. He poured out his whole heart with sorrow and fear. Look at these words. I cry to you for help. I cry to you, violence. That's in verse two. Just picture. A mother who sees her child fall into a river and being swept away by the current, he does not speak calmly. He will scream and ask him for help, save my child. That is how Quebecer cried out as he watched the whole society falling apart.

Remember his ministry is contemporary with that of Jeremiah and also Zephaniah. That's a time approach the fall of Jerusalem to Babylon. And that's a time that leads to exile. He cried for the open moral corruption of Judah. And it was a cry of a broken heart. And a broken heart, a broken and a contrite heart, O God, you will not despise. That's a testimony of David in Psalm 51. God sees the tears of his people and treasures them. As Psalm 56 says, you have kept count my dole tossings, put my tears in your bottle and they not in your book. That's how God treasure his people. when he sees the contrite heart, he will treasure their loyalty, their dependence on him.

You should examine your own prayers. Do you know the character of God you are speaking to? Do you believe in his perfect wisdom, goodness, love, and power? Are you sincere in your prayer? When you ask, do you actually expect him to answer your prayer? Do you keep praying if the answer has not yet come yet? In Luke 18, Jesus told the parable of the persistent widow, so that we ought always to pray and not lose heart. It is right to bring your doubts, confusion, and even complaints honestly to God. Your thoughts may be wrong, but bring them to Him. Anyway, ask Him to correct them and to give you a new perspective. And that is the right way to pray.

### **Point 3: Habakkuk Prayed for the Right Things**

Habakkuk not only prayed in the right way, he also prayed for the right thing. And that is our third point from the second part of verse three to verse four. What did Habakkuk pray for? He prayed that God's law will be obeyed in Judah, and the justice will be restored.

In verse 3 and 4, he paints a vivid contrasting picture, featuring two figures. The first figure, we see the first figure in verse 4. So the law is paralyzed. The Habakkuk pictures God's law as a man who can no longer move or do what he is made to do. Why had God given Israel the law? To bless them. The law taught them how to love God and one another so that they might enjoy peace and prosperity in the land. God said to the Israelites in Leviticus chapter 26, if you walk in

my statues and observe my commandments and do them, then I will give you your reigns in their season, and the land shall yield its increase. I will give peace in the land, and you shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid. And I will make you walk among you, and I will be your God.

So, what about the second figure we see in verse 3? Strive and contention arise. Once a law lies paralyzed, strive and contention stand up like a strong man. And what they bring to? They'll bring destruction and violence. That is the chaos that follows when God's law is persistently being disobeyed. There is no peace. Dispute, quarrels, and lawsuits spread among neighbors, in workplaces, and even in families. If left unchecked, they grow into physical violence, destruction of property, and even murder. That was the society Habakkuk lived in.

Habakkuk also named the cause of this Chaos. Look at verse four. The wicked surround the righteous, so justice goes forth perverted. The officers God had ordained to uphold his law has been corrupted. Perhaps the priests who were to teach the law neglected and broke it themselves. Perhaps the king and the officials who were to govern by it violated instead. Either way, the wicked held power. They hanged the righteous on every side until they lost their influence in the land.

So Habak prayed for the right thing. that God's will and God's law will be honored in Judah. He judged his society and he brought his prayer to God on the basis of God's promise and God's law. Your prayers should do the same. Your love for God, your love for your neighbor should show in what you pray for. Let your prayer rest on God's promise and God's law.

## **Application to Our Day**

How to apply this to our own day? Though the disorder of Habakkuk's day is just as visible in ours, strife and contention fill the news and social media. Theft and violence are often treated lightly. Calling evil what it is can bring ridicule or accusation. Those charged with upholding justice sometimes protect the wrongdoers more than the one who were wronged.

Are these things in your prayer? Do you see them merely as social and political problem? Or do you see them for what they, at the root, is disobedience to God's law? You should pray with understanding. Cry out to God for help as Habakkuk did, and do not stop until Christ returns. But pray with understanding, no confusion. Jesus and Paul warned that lawlessness would

increase in the last days and that sins would grow even worse before Christ's return. That's the teaching in Matthew chapter 24 and 2 Thessalonians chapter 2.

You should pray with confidence and hope. Jesus Christ has overcome the world. He reigns in heaven. He restrains and conquers all his and our enemies. He rewards those who seek him. And the day is coming when he will judge publicly and finally.

You should pray for the church and the world. Pray for your pastors. Ask God to keep them faithful to the truth and courageous in proclaiming it even under pressure. And give thanks. Thanks God for faithful ministers and a faithful church. Pray for Christian living in your family, in your church, and even the Christians in the world. Ask that believers will love God's law and live it out with resolve. And pray to be sought and liked yourself, so that others may see the glory of God in your conduct.

## **Finding Joy and Seeing Christ**

Before I conclude my sermon, I'd like to mention two things.

First, find joy in God of salvation. Habakkuk's book begin with a prayer of tears, confusion, perplexity, but it ends with a song of great joy. Yet his circumstance had not changed. In fact, he expects them to grow even worse. Look at Habakkuk 3, verse 17. This is a picture of total desolation. Worse than anything he described at the beginning. And yet, he goes on, yet I will rejoice in the Lord. I will take joy in the God of my salvation. His joy rested in God alone, the God who would save him. What God did to Habakkuk's heart, he can do the same in yours. As you pray earnestly and persistently, honestly laying your heart before him, his spirit will enlighten your mind, renew your will, and strengthen your faith. Through prayer, the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

The second point, see Christ in Habakkuk. Finally, Habakkuk points us to Christ. In his earthly ministry, Jesus saw firsthand how God's law has been paralyzed. The temple had become a marketplace. The Sabbath was burdened with man-made rules. The teachers of the law lacked true understanding and were full of pride and hardness of heart. In the gospel, we see Jesus constantly in prayer. He grieved over his disciples' little faith, pronounced vows on those who would not repent, and wept over Jerusalem. Yet he knew the Father's will and the plan of salvation perfectly. and he kept a perfect line of prayer with the Father. He also teach us, his followers, how to pray, and he give us the Lord's Prayer as our pattern.

So we should pray. Brothers and sisters, we cannot say we do not know how to pray. We have seen how Habakkuk prayed and how God worked in his heart to strengthen his faith. We have the Lord's Prayer as our model, and we have the Holy Spirit help us in our weakness. As Romans chapter 8, verse 36 to 39 beautifully summarized, for your sake, we are being killed all the day. We are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered. A sad situation, right? And they said, no. That's not true. No. In all these things, we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. We are not been defeated losers in the eyes of the world. In God's eyes, we are the conquerors. We are in God's side. We are in Christ. Overcome the world. For I'm sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor power, nor height or depth, nor anything else in all creation will not be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. That's a confidence he will give us.

## **Closing Prayer**

Let us pray.

Our Heavenly Father, we thank you for your word. We thank you for the gifts of scripture, prayer, and the Holy Spirit, by which you grow us in faith in Jesus Christ and apply to us the benefits of his redemption. We thank you for the example of Habakkuk. He prayed with an open heart, earnestly and honestly. He was a man with limits. but he brought those limits openly before you, and you worked facing him, turned his heart, gave him a new view of his circumstance, and renewed his obedience. Lord, we need that same faith and that same new obedience. Teach us to pray. Help us to pray every day according to your will, as you have revealed in your law and your promise. Help us to understand your word. In all our weakness and failings, help us to pray openly and honestly, bringing you our confession, confusion, our doubts, and even our complaints. And let your Holy Spirit work in our hearts, show us your glory, and help us to grow in Jesus Christ and in obedience to your statutes. We pray in Jesus' name, amen.