

Habakkuk – Why Lord?

By Lonny R. Bower, 9 September, 2009

We are living in a day where evil is increasing and the powers of darkness seem to prevail. Where the church has seemed to have lost her power; where the truly righteous and holy – those who hunger for the Lord and genuinely desire to please Him are few and far between. Have you ever considered the amount of evil and injustice in the world today? Have you ever looked at the wickedness and been prompted to ask – why Lord? Perhaps you are so overcome by the cares of daily life that you are not aware of the evil around you. The devil has effectively brought in deception and unrest; he has introduced fear into the lives of many. He is wreaking havoc across the world; he is causing evil to abound in literally every sector of society! You don't have to fear the darkness and evil that prevails in the world, but you can walk in boldness, in light and in an expectation that God is able to deliver you! He is able to intervene at just the right time and bring new hope into your life! He has not ignored you, nor is He ignorant to what you have been going through. He sees the struggle in your relationships, He knows the anxiety you have because of the uncertainty about your future, He feels the pain and rejection you have experienced. He has heard your cry in the quiet hours of the night and He has told you to be patient because your hour is coming. The hour of your deliverance, the hour of your salvation, the hour of your equipping, the hour of your empowerment! Look to Him now, while he may be found, call upon Him while He is near! Be still in the midst of this evil generation and know that He is God! His ways are higher than your ways and His thoughts than your thoughts! Church we can't afford to get side tracked by the evil in our world and loose sight of how great and mighty our Lord and Savior is! He has not lost control, He has not gone on a journey, He has not lost His hearing, He is simply waiting for us to confront the evil in our world with His living word! Unfortunately many Christians have not only learned to live with evil, but have mixed it with the worship of God – polluted worship! They stand and presumptuously lead others down the same road of destruction defiling every aspect of the ministry! Is it any wonder why we don't see God move in our midst! As a result to this polluted worship many cannot even distinguish between good and evil any longer. Once the worship of God is polluted the so called Christian only multiply their sins by going to church, because when they go they have no expectation of encountering the power of God and absolutely no desire to change! This is the level that Israel had reached when the Lord called an unlikely prophet named Amos to cry out against them; this is the quagmire Judah was in when Habakkuk stood and prophesied. The end result for both was the judgment of God! What will be our end if we do not learn to live holy and righteous lives? It is time for the worldwide church to hear the message of God's pending judgment – In 1741 Jonathan Edwards stood and preached “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God” the first Great Awakening was the result. I believe it's time to preach not only “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God, but “Servants in the Hands of an Angry God” perhaps if we'll get reacquainted with righteousness and holiness we'll not only see a 21st century awakening, but a revival that will sweep across the face of the earth touching every church regardless of the name over the door!

Habakkuk – Why Lord?
By Lonny R. Bower, 9 September, 2009

Introduction to Habakkuk:

Habakkuk a citizen of Judah (southern kingdom) was penned around 605BC, around the fall of the mighty Assyrian empire and the rise of Babylon. He does not prophesy directly to Judah, but instead records his personal conversations with God. Isn't it comforting to know that we serve a God that allows us to communicate directly with him? Habakkuk is not mentioned anywhere else in the Bible, but he speaks the words that generations later will shake the very foundation of "men's" doctrines. As the young monk Martin Luther was crawling up the Scala Sancta (Holy Stairs) in Rome in a vain attempt to work for his salvation he stood to his feet and quoted Habakkuk 2:4 "*The Just shall live by his faith*". The scripture gives no indication to who he was or from where he came except that he was a prophet. An interesting footnote on Habakkuk however is that through tradition many Jewish rabbis believed that Habakkuk was the son of the Shunamite woman whom Elisha raised from the dead (2 Kings 4:18-37). (Not to be confused with the tradition about Jonah being the son of the widow at Zarephath whom Elijah raised from the dead 1 Kings 17:8-24).

Background:

Habakkuk was burdened down by the unrighteousness and endless evil in his culture – sin, evil and injustice were continually before his eyes and it grieved him in his spirit and in his flesh! He observed the advancing Babylonians and even experienced their wrath. He was perplexed that God would not only allow evil to reign within the borders of Judah, but He would allow Babylon, a wicked empire to subdue them. Hopefully we will see in ourselves a reflection of Habakkuk and not a reflection of the evil that disturbed this godly man.

I. Look Around and Ask - Habakkuk 1:1-4, 5-11, 12-17

Habakkuk was no stranger to violence and injustice, in fact without the proper history of the times he lived in, one could think that he was peering prophetically into our day! This is what sets the word of God apart from all other literature in the world – it's living and powerful...(Hebrews 4:12)! It is able to transcend time and culture, it's more powerful than earthly kingdoms and spiritual principalities! Though Habakkuk penned these words over 2,600 years ago – it still speaks to this generation! It still speaks to our circumstances and is so aptly relevant to our own lives – God is speaking directly to us! Does it sound familiar? Sin, evil and injustice seem to rule our day, regardless of the culture – it's simply rampant in our society! However, instead of being burdened by it, many have grown numb to it, sensitized to the point where they are not grieved in their spirit or shaken in their flesh! Therefore, they do not cry out to the Lord as Habakkuk did – how long oh Lord will you allow this behavior to continue, when oh Lord will you bring justice? His response was similar to Lot's who the scripture says being a righteous man he was tormented in his soul (2 Peter 2:7, 8)! On the contrary though we have learned to not only tolerate evil, but have become quite comfortable living with it!

Habakkuk – Why Lord?
By Lonny R. Bower, 9 September, 2009

Think About it:

How do you view the wickedness in our world today? Have you ever asked God for justice?
Can you relate with Habakkuk and his burden of grief? Why or why not?

¹*Habakkuk could have said more about the abominable religion of the Babylonians. They believed in a multitude of gods and goddesses, with Bel as the head of their pantheon. Anu was the god of the sky, Nebo the god of literature and wisdom, and Nergal was the sun god. Sorcery was an important part of their religion, including honoring Ea, the god of magic. Their priests practiced divination and consulted omens, all of which was prohibited by the law of Moses. It seemed unreasonable that the Lord would allow such spiritually ignorant people to conquer Judah, the land that housed His own temple*

II. Watch for God to Answer – Habakkuk 2:1-20

We may not always understand the ways of the Lord, for His thoughts are not are thoughts and His ways are not our ways! He will answer according to His will and His word! We often pray so specific that we don't allow God to answer – in essence saying Lord it's my way or no way. The Lord's way is the only way, He knows the best for His people He knows how to deliver you – just let Him do it, let Him have His way. We see in Habakkuk an expectation of hearing from God, though he did not like the first answer from God he asked the second question and expected God to answer. Not only did he expect God to answer he made sure that he was in a place where he would hear God speak.

Think about it:

Are you expecting God to answer, are you in a place where you will hear Him when He answers?
Have you received what He has already spoken?

¹*We are not only saved by faith (Eph. 2:8-9), but we are instructed to live by faith. “And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith” (1 John 5:4, NKJV). Faith is a lifestyle that is just the opposite of being “puffed up” and depending on your own resources. Habakkuk knew that difficult times were coming to the people of Judah, and their only resource was to trust God's Word and rest in His will.*

III. Be Settled and Rejoice – Habakkuk 3:1-19

Habakkuk refuses to let what he knows he cannot change shake his faith. He looked past the obvious and peered with the eyes of faith into the divine will of His maker. God spoke to him and he listened and accepted His answer. In all this he knew the importance of not only trusting in, but rejoicing in the Lord of his salvation. You see, God may not always move according to our plan or purpose, but in the end He will bring us through the best way whether we like it or not – we might as well learn to like it. A final note here is that when we do it God’s way, all the time, then we are not faced with the circumstances that unrighteous living brings. It’s really a simple concept, but yet so hard for many to grasp – God desires that we live righteous lives.

Think about it:

Are you settled with God’s way?

Have you rejoiced in His way – even if it’s not a pleasant way?

¹When Habakkuk started his book, he was “down in the valley,” wrestling with the will of God. Then he climbed higher and stood on the watchtower, waiting for God to reply. After hearing God’s Word and seeing God’s glory, he became like a deer bounding confidently on the mountain heights! (3:19) His circumstances hadn’t changed, but he had changed, and now he was walking by faith instead of by sight. He was living by promises, not explanations.

Conclusion:

What have you asked Him for? Though Habakkuk, was probably poor, he did not use his circumstances or dire need to cry out to God selfishly, but he asked God how long until justice is served? He watched as Pharaoh Neco king of Egypt invaded his city and carried off king Jehoahaz to Egypt imposing on Judah heavy levies. Until now, he was probably unaware of the marching forces of Nebuchadnezzar returning from the battle of Carchemish where he finished off the Assyrian empire and subsequently turned on the Egyptians and defeated Pharaoh Neco and his armies. He did not know that Nebuchadnezzar would stop in Judah on his way back to Babylon and take captive king Jehoiakim, Daniel, his three friends and many others of the royal and priestly families. This invasion of Judah would set the stage for the judgment of God to later be poured out upon his rebellious and wicked people. He showed Habakkuk that the Babylonians would march against Jerusalem and totally destroy what was left – history and the scriptures record that this indeed happened in 586BC. So not only was Habakkuk carrying the burden of the sin of his people, he was carrying the burden of knowing God’s judgment was coming and could not be averted! The Justice Habakkuk asked for was coming, but not in the way he imagined – for he simply wanted God to remove the unrighteousness and allow the righteous ones to remain. However, this would not be the case; the righteous would suffer judgment along with the unrighteous! Don’t think that your sin and unbelief only affects you – it is far reaching and its consequences are immeasurable! Like Habakkuk we may expect God to just wipe out the wicked and ask: why do they prosper? God has a plan for their salvation and though his mercy may tarry, it will not tarry forever. It may not happen in our time or in our way, but we don’t have to doubt His ability to bring justice to an unjust world.

References:

Unless otherwise noted scripture references are taken from the NKJV

¹Warren Wiersbe’s “Be” Series: Old & New Testaments