

THE REWARDS OF PATIENCE Sunday, October 5, 2014

Unifying Topic: REJOICE ANYWAY

Lesson Text

I. **Habakkuk Seeks An Answer From God** (Habakkuk 2:1)

II. **The Lord Responds To Habakkuk** (Habakkuk 2:2-5)

III. **Habakkuk Declares His Trust In God** (Habakkuk 3:17-19)

Lesson Text: Yea I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. (Habakkuk 3:18, KJV).

Unifying Principle: Some people experience so many difficulties in life that they lose all hope for the future. Where can they turn for direction when things get really bad? Job, the psalmist, and Habakkuk all affirm that—no matter what calamities might come their way—they will trust God, rejoice in God’s presence in their lives, and praise God for strength to carry on.

Lesson Aim: To demonstrate God’s response to tough questions from the prophet Habakkuk.

Life Aim: To remind us that although things may not appear to be just, God is in control and He will make things right at the appropriate time when He sees fit.

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- 2:1** I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved.
- 2:2** And the Lord answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it.
- 2:3** For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.
- 2:4** Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith.
- 2:5** Yea also, because he transgresseth by wine, he is a proud man, neither keepeth at home, who enlargeth his desire as hell, and is as death, and cannot be satisfied, but gathereth unto him all nations, and heapeth unto him all people:
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- 3:17** Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls:
- 3:18** Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.
- 3:19** The Lord God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places. To the chief singer on my stringed instruments.

HISTORY:

The prophet Habakkuk penned this book in approximately 605 B. C. Very little is known about him, except his work in this book. His name is best translated “One who embraces” or “clings.” He identifies himself as a “prophet” having a burden. He begins his dialogue with a complaint towards God because this was about the time the Babylonians came into power. Habakkuk was surely troubled— **his first Complaint concerned God answering his prayers:** How long shall I call/cry for help and you not hear? Or cry to you violence/murder and you not save? Why do you make me see iniquity and why do you idly look at wrong? Why does the evil in Judah go unpunished? (1:2–4). Well, **God Answers:** He lets Habakkuk know that he would be astounded as to His plan. He’s already answering his prayers, as He speaks—He’s raising up the Chaldeans (the little sister of Assyria and Babylonia), that bitter and hasty nation; those terrible and dreadful people who will strike terror and fear into every heart. They will punish Judah. The prophet had complained about violence, well the Chaldeans are all about violence. As Judah has sown violence, they will reap violence. Whatever tactics Judah tries to use against them will be useless. The Chaldeans will collect captives like sand (1:5–11). **Habakkuk’s Second Complaint concerned God’s justice:** Are You not from everlasting, O Lord, my God, my Holy One? We aren’t going to die. How can a just God use wicked Babylonia to punish a people more righteous than themselves? ¹When something in our lives just seems – WRONG! When events happen that are too disturbing for us to accept, we tend to question God. Doesn’t He live in heaven? Isn’t He holy? Doesn’t He know what is needed? How could this happen to my nation, my people, my family, to me? Does He even exist? Does He care? God’s answer became more perplexing than Habakkuk’s original complaint. Habakkuk wants to remind God of who He is, as if God doesn’t know who He is; and then he reminds God of the Chaldeans’ character. Then he wonders since they are so

¹ <http://www.fridaystudy.org/html/habakkuk/habakkuk1.html>

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

proud of their weapons of destruction, will they continually draw their sword killing them forever without pity? Will God do something to intervene? The question is left with God, for all questions must ultimately be resolved by Him! (1:12-17).

LESSON:

Habakkuk 2:1 Habakkuk Seeks An Answer From God

2:1 I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reprov'd. Habakkuk is waiting to see what God's answer will be. He says *he will stand upon his watch, and set upon the tower*. This is similar to a lookout who awaits a coming enemy. Although, Habakkuk is not expecting an enemy, he might be reprov'd by God for continuing this conversation when God has already answered the first complaint. However, Habakkuk waits in the city's watchtower with anticipation (expectation) for God's answer. This shows his attitude of patience, waiting and watching for God's response to this complaint. He wanted to be in the best position to receive God's message. This still shows within him that God will answer (having a trust in God), even if it's not the answer he wants. It's because he has a relationship with Him. And since Habakkuk is a prophet, he needed a Word for himself and for the people.

Habakkuk 2:2-5 The Lord Responds To Habakkuk

2:2 And the Lord answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. Well, he waited upon God and **God Answers:** Even though God speaks to him, this time God says make a record of it; *write it down and make it plain upon tables*. In an earlier lesson, God told Jeremiah to write all the words that He (God) spoke (Jer.30:1). The message is apparently written upon clay tablets in large, legible letters and posted in the marketplace where public notices were commonly placed. When one reads it, he was to run, not in fear, but in joy, to broadcast the message throughout the land. The message was both bitter and sweet; for it dealt with both the coming Chaldean invasion (which would be bitter) and also the ultimate defeat of the Chaldeans (which would be sweet).

2:3 For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry. The explanation of the vision is taken a step further. It pertains to an appointed time and it will be fulfilled precisely on time, not a moment too late or too early. The vision will be absolutely true and absolutely certain of fulfillment, though there might be intervening circumstances or occurrences that might indicate otherwise. But at the end it shall speak (fulfilled) and not lie, that the Chaldeans will be destroyed. *Though it tarry, wait for it*. Just as Habakkuk waited for God's answer, that's how he will wait to see the outcome, that God does not lie, and that's how we will wait to see the fulfillment of the Word pertaining to the return of the Lord Jesus Christ! We are to have that same assurance! It's at an appointed time! God's timing is always perfect!

2:4 Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith. There is a contrast of people depicted here: the prideful and the faithful. Those who are proud, presumptuous, thinking much of themselves, etc. will not survive, but are carrying seeds of destruction. But those who are righteous will live because they are faithful to God. The soul that is lifted up and puffed up is proud and is not upright; they rely in themselves, like the Babylonian nation, but the just are righteous and will live by his faith he puts in God. This is the core of God's message to and through Habakkuk. Even though God's plan will take a while to accomplish, the righteous will wait patiently for God. The difference between the two (prideful and the faithful) is the object in which they place their trust or belief in—the Chaldeans—in themselves; and the righteous—in God. The Chaldeans will die both physically and eternally; and the righteous will live eternally with God!

2:5 Yea also, because he transgresseth by wine, he is a proud man, neither keepeth at home, who enlargeth his desire as hell, and is as death, and cannot be satisfied, but gathereth unto him all nations, and heapeth unto him all people:— This is still in reference to the Chaldeans/Babylonians who are the proud and greedy, like death and

hell. They are never satisfied, but always wanting more. Habakkuk is expressing the results of those who trust in themselves and their resources and not God. Wine and wealth are treacherous and the proud Chaldean invader is restless and cannot stay at home. His appetite is large like that of Sheol and his greed is like death and cannot be satisfied. He gathers to himself all nations and collects all people as if he owned them.

NOT APART OF THE LESSON: 2:6-20 — 3:1-16

Five woes in the form of a taunt song were pronounced upon the Chaldeans in anticipation of their eventual judgment in verses **6-20**:

1. ²This first woe is pronounced on them because of their taking things that don't belong to them. "Woe to him that increaseth that which is not his." (2:6-8).
2. This second woe is pronounced upon them because of their wanting to do sinful things. "Woe to him that covereth an evil covetousness." (2:9-11).
3. This third woe is pronounced upon them because of their violence. "Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood." (2:12-14).
4. This fourth woe is pronounced upon them because of their treatment of their neighbors. "Woe unto him that giveth his neighbor drink." (2:15-17).
5. This fifth woe is pronounced upon the Chaldeans because of their idolatry. "Woe unto him that saith to the wood, awake; to the dumb stone, arise." (2:18-20).

³**Habakkuk chapter 3** reveals what happens when we stop complaining and allow the Holy Spirit to speak to us through prayer. The truth is, prayer always *changes* us, not God. Having had his eyes turned to God (**Hab. 2:20**), the prophet now responds with a prayer. It is the mountain top destination of a journey that began in a valley of distress. Habakkuk's attitude *changed* because He went back into God's Word and saw things through the eyes of faith and not the eyes of flesh. Habakkuk's prayer is expressed in three parts:

1. His prayer to God (**3:1-2**). Habakkuk is not discouraged or defeated. He knows that ultimately, the Babylonians will be destroyed, Israel will be exalted, and God's glory will fill the earth.
2. His praise of God (**3:3-15**). Just as God delivered from the hands of the Egyptians, He will deliver the Israel of his day from the Babylonians.
3. His trust in God (**3:16-19**). His complaints were replaced by confidence. His fear turns to faith. He realized that inner peace did not depend upon outward prosperity.

BACK TO THE LESSON

Habakkuk 3:17-19 Habakkuk Declares His Trust In God

3:17 **Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls:—**

The enemy's invasion will be ruthless, affecting not only the population, but also the orchards, vineyards, fields, and herds. Habakkuk begins with "*although*", meaning "*even if*" the fig tree does not blossom or fruit come on the vine; the produce of the olive will fail; the field yield no food; the flock cut off from the fold; and there be no herd in the stalls, yet in the midst of suffering and loss, Habakkuk has learned he can trust God even more so.

3:18 **Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.** But if he is fated to witness the devastation of the country, Habakkuk affirms that he will rejoice in the Lord, not in circumstances. With that kind of trust in God, he will joy in the God of his salvation who gives him strength.

3:19 **The Lord God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' feet, and he will make me to walk upon**

² <http://www.family-times.net/commentary/woe-to-the-wicked/>

³ <http://www.family-times.net/commentary/prayer-changes-things/>

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

mine high places. To the chief singer on my stringed instruments. Habakkuk can truly say that God is his strength, making his feet like hinds (gazelles) feet, who move with great swiftness and great surety in times of danger, seemingly oblivious to it, and making him to walk upon high places. Habakkuk can have sure footed confidence in God and bring him safely over the heights of the mountains, even amid extreme circumstances. His feelings were not controlled by the events around him but faith in God's ability to give him strength. When nothing makes sense, and when trouble seems more than you can bear, remember that God gives strength, surefooted confidence, able to run like a deer across rough and dangerous terrain. The note to the choir director was to be used when this passage was sung as a psalm in Temple worship.

SUMMARY:

Habakkuk complained vigorously to God about the situation. God's answer to Habakkuk is the same answer He would give to us: "Be patient and I will work out My plans in My perfect timing." Writing the vision down will be assurance for many generations to come. It helps to remember that God hates sin, even more than we do and punishment will certainly come (**2:1-5**).

Habakkuk gets such assurance knowing that even in the midst of Judah's devastation of vineyards, fields, and herds, he can rejoice in the Lord who is his salvation. God answered his complaints and questions because he wants His answer to be clear of His standards for His people which in the end would bring joy (**3:17-19**).

APPLICATION:

It's a surety that God answers prayer, but not in the way or the timing we expect. Don't lose the vision nor your joy while waiting.