

Living by Faith During Difficult Times

Lesson 2 of the series: "Habakkuk: When Trusting God Seems Impossible"

I. The OT prophet Habakkuk complained to God about how bad things were, and God answered him.

Habakkuk's 1st complaint: Why don't you do something about all the problems and evil going on? "How long, O Lord, must I call for help? But you do not listen! 'Violence is everywhere!' I cry, but you do not come to save." Habakkuk 1:2 (NLT)

God's reply: I am doing something, but you're not going to believe it or like it. "Look around at the nations; look and be amazed! For I am doing something in your own day, something you wouldn't believe even if someone told you about it. I am raising up the Babylonians, a cruel and violent people. They will march across the world and conquer other lands." Habakkuk 1:5-6 (NLT)

Habakkuk's 2nd complaint: Why would you allow the Babylonians to punish us? They're worse than we are! "O Lord, our Rock, you have sent these Babylonians to correct us, to punish us for our many sins. But you are pure and cannot stand the sight of evil. Will you wink at their treachery? Should you be silent while the wicked swallow up people more righteous than they? ...I will climb up to my watchtower and stand at my guard post. There I will wait to see what the Lord says and how he will answer my complaint."

Habakkuk 1:12-13, 2:1 (NLT)

II. God gave Habakkuk some important things to do when facing difficult times ahead.

A. We need to write down the insights God gives us.

"Then the Lord said to me, 'Write my answer plainly on tablets, so that a runner can carry the correct message to others.'" Habakkuk 2:2 (NLT)

Note: Writing things down:

- Helps information sink in
- Helps us remember what God said
- Helps us help others
- Helps us see our own growth/progress

"When he sits on the throne as king, he must copy for himself this body of instruction on a scroll in the presence of the Levitical priests. He must always keep that copy with him and read it daily as long as he lives. That way he will learn to fear the Lord his God by obeying all the terms of these instructions and decrees." Deuteronomy 17:18-19 (NLT)

B. We need to wait patiently for God's timing.

"This vision is for a future time. It describes the end, and it will be fulfilled. If it seems slow in coming, wait patiently, for it will surely take place. It will not be delayed." Habakkuk 2:3 (NLT)

"Be still in the presence of the Lord and wait patiently for him to act. Don't worry about evil people who prosper or fret about their wicked schemes. Stop being angry! Turn from your rage! Do not lose your temper— it only leads to harm." Psalms 37:7-8 (NLT)

"I want to remind you that in the last days scoffers will come, mocking the truth and following their own desires. They will say, 'What happened to the promise that Jesus is coming again? From before the times of our ancestors, everything has remained the same since the world was first created.' ...But you must not forget this one thing, dear friends: A day is like a thousand years to the Lord, and a thousand years is like a day. The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent."

2 Peter 3:3-9 (NLT)

C. We need to trust that God's justice and righteousness will prevail.

"But soon it will be your turn to be disgraced... Drink from the cup of the Lord's judgment, and all your glory will be turned to shame. You cut down the forests of Lebanon. Now you will be cut down. You destroyed the wild animals, so now their terror will be yours. You committed murder throughout the countryside and filled the towns with violence." Habakkuk 2:16-17 (NLT)

"Dear friends, never take revenge. Leave that to the righteous anger of God. For the Scriptures say, 'I will take revenge; I will pay them back,' says the Lord. Instead, 'If your enemies are hungry, feed them. If they are thirsty, give them something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals of shame on

their heads.' Don't let evil conquer you, but conquer evil by doing good." Romans 12:19-21 (NLT) (see also Deuteronomy 32:35)

D. We need to schedule time to be still (and quiet) in God's presence.

"But the Lord is in his holy Temple. Let all the earth be silent before him." Habakkuk 2:20 (NLT)

"Be still and know that I am God! I will be honored by every nation. I will be honored throughout the world." Psalms 46:10 (NLT)

Note: Being still helps us:

- Hear God so we can gain His perspective
- Renew our confidence in the Lord
- Find peace

E. We need to live by faith.

"Look at the proud! They trust in themselves, and their lives are crooked. But the righteous will live by their faithfulness to God." Habakkuk 2:4 (NLT)

"The righteous will live by faith." (Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11, & Hebrews 10:38)

"Faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see." Hebrews 11:1 (NIV)

"...we expected to die. But as a result, we stopped relying on ourselves and learned to rely only on God, who raises the dead." 2 Corinthians 1:9 (NLT)

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Connect Group Questions

1. Describe a time in your life when somebody told you that things were about to get worse (a bad diagnosis, an impending lawsuit, a business reversal, etc.). How did you handle it?
2. Read Habakkuk 2:2 & Deuteronomy 17:18-19. Then discuss the following advantages of journaling/writing things down.

Writing things down:

- Helps information sink in
- Helps us remember what God said
- Helps us help others
- Helps us see our own growth/progress

How well do you record important insights the Lord gives you?

3. The following New Testament passages all quote Habakkuk 2:4. Look them over and discuss why you think this is such an important verse.
 - Romans 1:16-17
 - Galatians 3:11
 - Hebrews 10:38
4. Read Habakkuk 2:16-17 & Romans 12:17-21. Why is it often hard for us to forgive (let go of) past hurts and wrongs and let God settle any score that needs to be settled?
5. Habakkuk 2:3, Psalm 37:7-8, & 2 Peter 3:3-10 all stress the importance of waiting on God's timing. Why do you think this is so difficult for most of us to do?
6. Read Habakkuk 2:20 & Psalm 46:10. Then discuss the following advantages of scheduling time to be still.

Being still helps us:

- Hear God so we can gain His perspective
- Renew our confidence in the Lord
- Find peace

7. How do you think the teachings from Habakkuk apply to our nation, our community, and our church?
8. Spend some time praying as a group about the things you discussed in point 7.