

Where Is God in Times of Trouble?

Habakkuk 1:1-2:4 || Pastor John Wood || 06 September 2020

*To CARE for one another in truth and in love,
To GROW together as followers of Jesus,
To SERVE those God has placed in our path.
– CG Mission Statement*

Icebreaker: If you had to give a TED talk right now, what would you talk about, and why?

Worship: Luke 10:27 (*Read aloud 3 times, reflect and listen for God's invitation to you.*)

Sermon Summary for Habakkuk 1:1-2:4

Where is God when life hurts, when injustice and violence fill the land, when His own people live no differently than the culture around them, when we cry out to Him and the heavens seem silent? These are the questions asked by the prophet Habakkuk as he cries out to the Lord. They are our questions too, so it's a great privilege to walk beside him on his journey from a fearful faith to one marked by joy.

In times of trouble, the first problem we face is God's strange silence. Why doesn't He seem to hear our cries? How can God remain silent? Like Habakkuk, we look to what God has done in the past to redeem His people and appeal to God's justice, steadfast love, and faithfulness. The problem is that God's answer to these appeals is even more troubling than His silence. The Lord responds that an even more terrifying enemy (than the one Habakkuk fears) will be a scourge to punish the divisions and violence plaguing God's people. How is this justice? How could God ordain such evil? What is the antidote to our outrage and despair in times of trouble? How are we to respond?

Watch and wait. As we continue to go to the Lord with our prayers and questions, we also need to watch, listen and seek to discern what God is doing and has been doing in light of His word. And as we come to understand God's purposes, we must see these troubling times as a call to put our lives on the line – to find positive, God-honoring, compassionate, Christlike ways to engage the culture from a Gospel perspective in word and deed.

Write the vision. When we begin to see what God is doing and learn His ways in the light of the Gospel, we should remember that this wisdom is not simply for us. It is to be shared. This can be challenging. We need to seek to understand the times... but within the context of a biblical world- and life-view. This requires prayer that God would grant us such discernment.

Trust the promise. Verse 4 reveals the Gospel more clearly than anywhere else in the Old Testament: *"The righteous shall live by faith."* All of history is under the control of an all-loving, all-knowing, all-powerful God who will get glory and will bring an end to violence and injustice... once they have accomplished His purposes. This is the message of scripture from beginning to end. Because the church of Jesus Christ was made for times like these (2 Pet 3:11-13, 1 Pet 2:17).

Here, at last, the prophet hears and trusts the promise that lies at the heart of the Gospel and has been used to change such lives as the apostle Paul (Rom 1:16-17) and the reformer Luther, and through them to change history – all because Habakkuk went to his watch post; he saw and he heard what God would do and say, and then Habakkuk wrote the vision for all of us to read: "The righteous shall live by faith."

Discussion Questions (We realize you will not be able to discuss all the questions. Pick the ones you like.)

- What does this passage teach us about prayer? How are you encouraged to pray more?
 - In Hab. 2:1, what does Habakkuk decide to do with his complaints of outrage, fear, and despair?
 - What might this look like in your life? Have you done this before? What was the result?
 - What can we learn about God's perspective of current events? What do we do with our limited perspective?
 - *The righteous shall live by faith.* What do you understand this promise to mean?
 - Give an example of how this promise is lived out and how it helps when we are tempted to despair.
 - What part of this discussion will you carry with you throughout the week?
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Prayer: Think about what you have heard God say to you in this passage and sermon. What has God been showing you that you would like to bring to Him in prayer?

Engage & Experience: How can we make sure the culture around us is not molding us into its image? How can we begin to see things the way God sees them? How can we gain an eternal perspective toward circumstances and people? What actions in word and deed can we take? Let Scripture influence your every thought this week.