

How to Handle What Life Throws at You!

The Book of Habakkuk

When we open this book, it is like cracking open the door to Habakkuk's prayer closet and hearing him pour out his frustrations, bitterness, and disappointments to God. Habakkuk shows us by example how to handle the difficulties life throws at us.

1. Pray about Your Problem (1:1-17)

Habakkuk prays three prayers in his short three chapter book.

A. The first prayer of complaint (1:1-4)

- 1) Habakkuk complains that God is inactive in judging the sins of the people of God in the Old Testament. In essence, he prays, "Why don't you do something?" This is Habakkuk's "Awesome Why" that James Dobson writes about that most of us at some point in our lives question God about.
- 2) God answers Habakkuk in 1:5-11. God says He is doing something. He is raising up the evil Babylonians who will be God's rod of chastisement on His people.

B. The second prayer of complaint (1:12-17)

Habakkuk now complains, "Why are you answering my prayer this way?" First, God was inactive, now God is unjust for using a more wicked people to chastise the less wicked people of God. We believers get frustrated that wickedness progresses almost unabated. This past week a US District Judge in Wisconsin ruled that the National Day of Prayer was a violation of the establishment clause of the 1st Amendment. This opinion comes in a case filed by the Freedom From Religion Foundation. This is a group of atheists and agnostics. The congress is not forcing us to pray as a nation. The leadership is summoning us to pray which has been done throughout the history of our nation. In 1775, the Continental Congress asked the colonists to observe a day of prayer and humiliation as they established a new nation. President Lincoln, a century later asked Americans to pray that our nation would survive the Civil War.

I love the bumper sticker message that now is on T shirts, coffee mugs, and computer mouse pads, "As long as there are tests in school, there will be prayer in school." No matter how this federal ruling is played out prayer will continue. It just bothers us that such rulings are pronounced.

2. Wait For God's Answer (2:1-5)

There seems to be a change of attitude in Habakkuk between chapter one and two. Now Habakkuk is willing to wait on God to respond to his complaints. He has grown patient. We sometimes fall on our knees to pray and expect God to tap us on the shoulder with the answer to which we reply, "What took you so long?"

God answers Habakkuk's second complaint (2:6-20). In Habakkuk's first complaint, he charged God with inactivity. God responded by informing him that He was already active in answering his prayer. In Habakkuk's second complaint, he accused God of injustice and inconsistency. God replied that He will judge sin and reward righteousness.

- A. God says in the future He will judge sin. God pronounces five "woes" on the nation of Babylon. In other words, God says to Habakkuk, "When I am through with my rod of chastisement, I will break it in two." God is not unjust or inconsistent. In the future, God will also bless and cause His righteousness to cover the earth as waters cover the seas. One day in the future God will right all wrongs (2:14).
- B. But until God does judge sin and bless His people, the righteous must live by faith (2:4). God ends his answer by telling Habakkuk and all of us in difficult testings to stop complaining because He is charge and ruling from His holy temple. (2:20).

John Wesley had been circuit riding for months in the downpour of rain. He grew weary of being soaking wet and complained to God and asked God why He did not stop the rain because it was hindering his work. About that time a highway robber jumped out from behind a tree with a flintlock musket. When the robber pulled the trigger to shot and rob Wesley, the gun failed the fire. The gun powder was wet from the rain. When the robber fled, Wesley climbed down off his horse and got down on his knees in the mud and thanked God for the rain.

3. Pray Some More about Your Problems (3:1-2)

Habakkuk's third prayer was not a complaint. He has stopped complaining. Now he prays for God to revive His work in the midst of His chastisement and in His wrath about to be poured out through the Babylonians to remember mercy. God will answer this prayer and the use Babylonian Captivity to bring revival to God's people as recorded in Ezra and Nehemiah.

Revivals in America have had an uncanny connection to crises. America was born in revival in the 1600's as a result of those who had come from the revival that had taken place in Europe in the 1500's known as the Great Reformation.

America remained unpopulated by the providence of God, so the persecuted saints of the Reformation could find a refuge in what they considered their Canaan. Though it is true that the majority of those who came from Europe to the 13 colonies, came for economic, social, and political reasons, the Founder's motives of America were spiritual. All of the pilgrims who came to America in 1620 were undoubtedly Christian. But with each succeeding generation the percentage began to drop. The faith of the fathers was destroyed by the faithlessness of the father's children. As a result of the Half-Way Covenant in 1662, America was in need of a spiritual Awakening in the mid 1600s. The Half-Way Covenant permitted those who had been baptized as infants to grow and be church members even though they never got saved.

The First Great Awakening

The spiritual Awakening began in the 1730s as a result of the preaching on the judgment of God by Jonathan Edwards as seen in his famous sermon "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God." God also greatly used the preaching of George Whitefield on the New Birth which he allegedly preached over 300 times. Someone once asked Whitefield why he preached so often on "You must be born again." He replied, "Because you must be born again." The result of this revival, which came to be known as the First Great Awakening, was the salvation of many church members and preachers.

The Camp Meeting Revival

This revival preceded the crisis of the War of Independence. After the War of Independence came the Camp Meeting Revival or the Frontier Revival between 1790 and 1810 when America was just beginning to expand westward beyond the original 13 colonies. These meetings began as sacramental meetings in sparsely populated areas in which people would travel long distances to take the Lord's Supper once a year. They would come and camp and renew old friends and sweethearts would see their boyfriends and girlfriends again. It was the social event of the year. From these meetings developed protracted preaching services over many weeks. Long sermons were preached by several preachers in the daytime. Several preachers would be preaching at the same time, yet far enough apart so as not to disturb the other preachers who were exhorting their group. The result of these annual protracted meetings was revival in the frontier.

The Second Great Awakening

While the Camp Meeting revival was being experienced in the frontier of America, New England started enjoying the 2nd Great Awakening which is also called the New England Revival which extended from 1800 to about 1830. While great emotions were expressed in the Frontier Revival, emotions were restrained among the Ivy League of New England, and yet both experienced revival and souls were converted.

The Charles Finney Revival

These two revivals, the Frontier and the Second Great Awakening, preceded another crisis in America, the War of 1812. The War of 1812 was followed by the Charles Finney Revival between 1830 and 1860. This revival was also called the New Measures Revival because of the new methods employed, such as, the anxious bench, the mourner's bench, public invitations, the singing of sacred songs and cottage prayer meetings.

The Fulton Street Prayer Revival

The Finney Revival was followed by the crisis of 1857 which produced a financial panic in America similar to the Great Depression. The result of this crisis was a weekly prayer meeting which started in New York City in a church on Fulton Street at 12:00 noon. This prayer meeting spread up and down the Eastern Seaboard and it is said one half million souls were prayed into the kingdom of God

The D. L. Moody Revival

The Civil War in America was the next crisis. In the Civil War, a great nation was deeply wounded, in many cases a brother fought against his own brother and homes were shattered. After this deeply emotional and traumatic crisis came the preaching on the love of God by D. L. Moody in the 1870's and 80's. Moody's preaching on this grand theme was like a healing anointment for our suffering nation.

The Billy Sunday Revival

The Spanish American War followed the Moody Revival. Then came the dynamic Billy Sunday. Sunday did not preach or orate but exploded when he got behind the pulpit. Sunday's message was separation from sin, worldliness and Booze. The result of Sunday's preaching was the closing down of many liquor stores and the 18th Prohibition Amendment. Sunday would go into a city and find out what its problems and sins were and then he would preach accordingly. He would pick up the language and sayings of the people and use them in his sermons so as to better identify with the people.

Once in a community of lumbermen he noticed how the lumbermen would go deep into the forest to cut wood and would sprinkle sawdust along the way in order to find their way back. At the end of the work day, the lumbermen would holler, "Let's hit the sawdust trail and go back home." In the next service under the large Billy Sunday Tabernacle which had sawdust as a covering for the floor, Sunday in his invitation, exhorted wicked lumbermen to "Hit the sawdust trail" and make their way back to God. From then on Sunday employed the phrase in his meetings and had saw many come to Christ.