

Habakkuk

Rejoice Anyway

Focal Verses: Habakkuk 2:1-5, 3:17-19

Aim for Change

By the end of this lesson, we will: **DISCOVER** God's message of patience and assurance that God will act with Justice; **EXPERIENCE** the feeling of joy that comes from patiently waiting on God's promises; and **PRACTICE** responding to difficulties by trusting in God's presence and by praising God for strength to endure.

In Focus

He could hear the clock ticking on the wall. Warren waited in silence for the phone to ring. His foot kept tapping and he knew it was his nerves. When he stopped tapping his foot, he began to tap the pen on the table. *How come they haven't called already?* he thought to himself. For Warren, any longer was too much longer. He had just been in an interview after months of getting no responses from any companies he applied to. He had stepped out in faith believing God had told him to leave his job. But then again, it wasn't too hard to quit after Warren found out that his company had been engaging in dubious billing practices for years and had no intention of rectifying it after confronting them. However, the bills were piling up, and he began waking up at night, wondering how he was going to care for his wife and maintain his investment portfolio to support the more than dozen ministries his family supported. Was God hearing his prayers? There was nothing left for Warren to do. He felt like he could not go on any longer without an answer from God. Warren thought for a moment about their situation. He knew that God was in control of it all. He also knew that God deserved to be praised whether he got a job or not. So Warren began to shout "Hallelujah!" and "Thank You, Jesus" as an act of faith in God's care. While he was shouting and praising God, the phone rang.

While waiting for God, hold on to every promise from His Word. Praise God for what He has done. Praise God for what He is doing. Praise God for what He will do.

Keep In Mind

“Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labor 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—yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation (Habakkuk 3:17-18)

Lesson Text

Micah 6:3-8

3 O My people, what have I done unto thee? And wherein have I wearied thee? Testify against Me!

4 For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of servitude; and I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.

5 O My people, remember now what Balak king of Moab counseled, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him, from Shittim unto Gilgal, that ye may know the righteousness of the Lord.”

6 With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old?

7 Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

8 He hath shown thee, O man, what is good: and what doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?

The Lesson

The People, Places and Times

Habakkuk: A prophet of the late seventh century. His name in Hebrew means “embrace” or “ardent embrace.” As the chosen human instrument for God, he spoke the Word of God to the people. Not much is known about Habakkuk the person other than he may have been a Levite who was familiar with the temple singers. This is due to the musical notation that is found at the conclusion of the book that bears his name.

Prophet: One called to receive and declare a word from God after being prompted by the Holy Spirit. Prophets were usually called to speak a word concerning the present and the future. Their words could be addressed to nations as well as individuals. God used prophets to speak of injustice and wickedness in the nation of Israel. This was accomplished not only through verbal means; sometimes prophets were called to demonstrate their message through physical acts. Habakkuk was a prophet. Other known prophets are Moses, Samuel, Elijah, and Elisha.

Background

As with many righteous religious leaders, Habakkuk faced a lot of wickedness and injustice during his time. This was a time when, after a period of reform under King Josiah, many in Israel had fallen back into godlessness and idolatry. Instead of speaking out against national sin and addressing the perpetrators of wickedness, Habakkuk addressed himself to God. He could not stand to see the wicked get away with their crimes and sinful actions. He complained to God and asked, “How long, O LORD...?” (from 1:2). Habakkuk’s personal plea was a radical departure from the usual activity of the prophets who pronounced judgement and encouraged the people to repent of their ways. This time he questioned the justice of God.

God answered by explaining His plans to judge the wicked and to assure Habakkuk to not worry. God reminded Habakkuk He is indeed righteous and will judge the wicked. The form in which this judgment would come left Habakkuk amazed and astounded: It would be through the Chaldeans. The Lord would assign a wicked nation to discipline His people. This was something that Habakkuk could not comprehend. Why would the Lord allow a nation who was more wicked than Judah to conquer them? Why would He send a pagan nation to conquer His chosen people? The Lord addressed this question and gave Habakkuk reason to rejoice and trust in Him.

In Depth

1. Habakkuk Trusts God for an Answer (Habakkuk 2:1–3) Habakkuk has asked questions of God and now stands like a watchman waiting for an answer. This attitude and posture shows that Habakkuk had faith and trust in God. His questions were not questions based on doubt, but a rock-solid faith in God. He embraced the hard questions and is willing to receive the answer that God would give.

This is the second time Habakkuk receives a response from God: “Then the LORD said to me” (v. 2, NLT). God instructs Habakkuk to write down the vision as he receives it. The written vision gives Habakkuk credibility before speaking it to the people. The written vision also serves as a guarantee God will act and does act.

The Lord also assures Habakkuk of the vision’s timing. The vision would come to pass in a future time. God says that the vision will be delayed, but it will come to pass. It will not be delayed indefinitely. It will be delayed but not denied! Habakkuk is given assurance that the vision will come to pass in God’s timing. Then the Lord encourages him to wait for the vision to be fulfilled. The assurance that what God has spoken will come to fruition will enable Habakkuk to wait and endure the injustice of the present.

2. Habakkuk Must Continue to Trust (vv. 4–5) In the vision, God assures Habakkuk to remain committed to God in the midst of the injustice and violence taking place around him. “Look at the proud! They trust

in themselves, and their lives are crooked. But the righteous will live by their faithfulness to God” (v. 4, NLT). God gives Habakkuk the right way to respond to the wickedness around him: trust. Trust will separate the righteous from the wicked. Trust in the Lord distinguishes God’s people from those who trust in themselves. God lets Habakkuk know that he is supposed to live by faith. Faith should permeate all aspects of his life. His whole way of being should be characterized by trusting in God, not himself.

The Lord then describes the character of the wicked. They drink excessively and are full of pride. They have an insatiable greed and attempt to bring everything under their ownership. This is also a picture of the Babylonian ruler who will come to conquer Judah. It is a picture of someone who is not in a relationship with God but is against God and His people. This is the type of person who symbolizes the opposite of God’s mandate to live by faith. It is the perfect example of someone who trusts in nothing but himself. These people are self-centered and only seek their own gratification. This is not the way the righteous live. The righteous are called to live by faith in a God who takes care of them and will remedy every injustice.

3. Habakkuk Trusts God Enough to Rejoice (vv. 3:17–19) Habakkuk describes utter disaster for an agricultural way of life (v. 17). Nothing that is planted grows and the animals fail to reproduce. It is a sad picture that spoke to the mostly agricultural society in those times. The first hearers would have seen this as the worst thing that could happen to someone. It is a scene where there is no sign of life or growth. There is no provision that the land can give. It is barren. This is a picture of poverty and devastation. After painting this scene, the next words are surprising. “Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation” (v. 18, KJV). Habakkuk says that in the midst of utter devastation and loss, he will rejoice. The key thing to realize is what he is rejoicing in. Habakkuk does not say he will rejoice in this situation, but that He will rejoice in the Lord. His joy will come from the God of his salvation. It is not the circumstances that give him a reason to rejoice; Habakkuk rejoices because the Lord is his strength and will support him and make him firm and stable as a deer on a high mountain.

Liberating Lesson

There are two types of people in this world: those who trust in themselves and those who trust in God. When life comes crashing down, those who trust in themselves have no reason to rejoice. They cannot sustain joy in times of disappointment. Belief, hope, and trust in God are prerequisites for enduring the daily challenges of life. When disappointment and suffering appear, our trust in God is the primary factor that can sustain our joy. In this world full of crime, economic crisis, and terrorism, we can rejoice in knowing God, who is sovereign over all.

Application for Activation

The problems and trials of life can bring us down. Sometimes our patience can wear thin and our joy can decrease. Think of one thing that you have been waiting for God to act on. It could be a job opportunity or a loved one coming to know Jesus. It has to be something that hasn’t happened yet. Praise and thank

God as an act of faith that He will bring it to pass. Let God be your joy in the absence of the thing that you have been waiting for.

Take Aways

Closing Prayer

Week of 03 March 24

Daily Bible Readings



Monday – Psalm 96-102

Tuesday – Psalm 103-105

Wednesday – Psalm 106-107

Thursday – Psalm 108-114

Friday – Psalm 115-118

Saturday – Psalm 119:1-88

Sunday – Psalm 119:89-176