

## Why Won't You Answer Me? (Habakkuk)

### Introduction:

- I. It is sometimes unbelievable what goes on in our society today. It is almost unbearable to watch the news, because it seems that everything is crime and injustice. Our schools have lost the right of prayer, large corporations are cheating consumers out of money, many professional athletes are very poor role models, and movies are progressively getting worse.
- II. We pray day in and day out that God intervene and show the world that he is in control. We want the world to be fair, our schools to be better, and our children's lives cleaner. It is sometimes tempting to ask God, "Why haven't you answered my prayer?"
- III. The truth is that God's thoughts are higher than our thoughts, and his ways higher than our ways (Isaiah 55:8-9). We need to understand that:
  - a. God knows what is going on.
  - b. God knows what he is doing.
  - c. We will be alright.
- IV. This may not make all of the problems in our world go away, but it will help us to understand how to deal with what is going on. We will study from the writings of Habakkuk the prophet.
  - a. Habakkuk wrote his prophecy between 640 and 615 B.C.
  - b. Assyria had recently overtaken and scattered Israel for her wickedness.
  - c. Judah has become increasingly ungodly and unjust.
  - d. Babylon is rising up as a world power and is threatening Judah.
  - e. Habakkuk just does not see how God can "sit there and do nothing."
    - i. Habakkuk 1:1-4.

### Discussion:

- I. God Knows What is Going On.
  - a. God is in control of the events of life.
    - i. The events of life follow his divine plan.
      1. "I am doing a work...that you would not believe if told." (5)
        - a. Sometimes we do not see what is going on in the way God does. He is telling Habakkuk that he is in control. He is "doing a work." It was not just simply happening. God was doing this.
        - b. This phrase is quoted in the New Testament in Acts 13:41, where Paul has preached about the Christ which has come. He was warning the Jews, his audience, that God actually had raised Jesus up as the Messiah. He did not want them to discount his words as nothing, so he quoted scripture written at a time when their forefathers had discounted the words of God and were judged.

- c. Sometimes things are not going to be as they seem to be. We are not in control. We are not God.
  - ii. The events of life follow his divine timetable.
    - 1. "I am doing a work in your days." (5)
      - a. This serves to show God's control in a deeper way. Not only does he decide what happens, but when it happens.
      - b. In the immediate context of this verse, God is saying that he is raising up the Chaldeans (the Babylonians) as a world power. He was allowing them to gain power in order to overtake Judah in order to punish them for their increasing wickedness. This came to fulfillment in 587-586 B.C., when Judah was taken, and shortly after, Jerusalem was destroyed. This happened in the days of Habakkuk.
      - c. Today, we tend to forget that God is doing things on his own time. Maybe he will bring our country to a better morality level someday. He may even choose to allow our country to be conquered by another country in order to judge us. We cannot use this time to feel like God has abandoned us. He is in control.
      - d. More dreadfully, we can forget that God will send Christ back and judge the world at the last day. II Peter 3:9 says, "The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance." We do not need to let the "delay" of his coming to lead us to think that he is not. He is doing this on his own time.
  - iii. The events of life serve a purpose for his kingdom.
    - 1. "You have ordained them as a judgment and...established them for reproof." (12)
      - a. God also controls the "why" of what happens. In the story of Habakkuk, he had ordained Babylon to judge Judah. In other prophecies, we can find other purposes God wanted to achieve.
      - b. In Daniel 2, we read about a dream that Nebuchadnezzar had which Daniel interpreted to be the future of the world powers in the area. Babylon (Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom) would be overtaken by the Medes and Persians, Persia would be overtaken by Greece (then a feeble, weak nation), Greece would be overtaken by Rome, and Rome would be brought to an end by God's kingdom.
        - i. All of these events took place, but why in this order? Alexander led Greece to take over much of the then-known world, spreading Greek culture and language everywhere he went. Rome took over Greece and went about conquering to expand the empire's area. Rome built excellent roads

throughout the empire, making travel safe and easy. An almost worldwide peace ensued, during which Christ was born. His claim to royalty would have made Romans nervous, which could be a reason the Jews said “He calls himself a king” and “If you do not crucify him you are not a friend to Caesar.” Thus Christ was crucified. This peace, common language, and ease of travel helped the spread of the gospel, so that the church could grow in its infancy. Did God know what was going on?

## II. God Knows What He Is Doing.

- a. We just discussed the active role God has in history. Do we think God capable of handling all of this? I am sure we do.
- b. Habakkuk did not understand why things were happening the way they were. He asked God, “You who are of purer eyes than to see evil and cannot look at wrong, why do you idly look at traitors and are silent when the wicked swallows up the man more righteous than he?”
- c. We may not question God’s power outright, but we sometimes doubt. “How could God allow this to happen?” “Why do children have to suffer?” We just must remember that God knows what he is doing.
- d. God answered Habakkuk by telling him that he knows what he is doing by comparing himself to the idols worshiped by Judah: “Woe to him who says to a wooden thing, ‘Awake;’ to a silent stone, ‘Arise!’ Can this teach? Behold it is overlaid with gold and silver, and there is no breath at all in it. But the LORD is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him.”
  - i. God does not need our input in order to act. In the case of idols, men command the idol to “awake” or “arise,” or to meet one of their wants, but God is the one in control, and we have no right to command him anything. He knows what he is doing.

## III. We Will Be Alright.

- a. God’s answer to Habakkuk’s complaint, “Why are you allowing the wicked to swallow up those who are more righteous,” is this: It’s going to happen, but “The righteous one will live by his faith.”
  - i. We often look at faith as “belief,” or “trust.” This is not as deep as the word goes. Faith means “loyalty” or “trueness.” We stay with God, and he will stay with us. We are going to make it, no matter what happens. This is a concept that Paul definitely thought important, for he quoted it twice, in Romans 1:17 and Galatians 3:11. In the context of both, Paul is emphasizing that obedience is not what brings righteousness, but being true to God.

## **Conclusion:**

- I. We can learn two things from this that we can take home.
  - a. If we are loyal to God, we will be fine.
  - b. If we are faithful, God will overlook our sins.

- II. Have you been worried about how things are going to pan out in our society today? Do you fear for our nation's future? Remember that God is not just part of the equation, he is the one who performs the equation. He will do what is right. He will take care of things. If you are faithful, you will be fine. If not in this life, you will in the next.
- III. Have you been unfaithful to God? You can return to him now and you will have a renewed life; you, too will live by faith. Having a faithful relationship with God requires you to take action. Hebrews 11:6 says that "without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him."
  - a. We read earlier from Isaiah 55:8-9, where "God's thoughts are higher than our thoughts, and his ways higher than our ways." Turn back there and read verses 6-7.
    - i. "Seek the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."
    - ii. Do you need to seek the Lord today, call upon him while he is near?
    - iii. Forsake your evil ways, your unrighteous thoughts, and turn to the Lord.
    - iv. The righteous will live by his faith. Come to God for a new life today.