

Have Faith Anyway
Habakkuk 1:1-5: 3:17-19

(Story:)

The story is told of a king in Africa who had a close friend with whom he grew up. The friend had a habit of looking at every situation that ever occurred in his life (positive or negative) and remarking, "This is good!"

One day the king and his friend were out on a hunting expedition. The friend would load and prepare the guns for the king. The friend had apparently done something wrong in preparing one of the guns, for after taking the gun from his friend, the king fired it and his thumb was blown off. Examining the situation, the friend remarked as usual, "This is good!"

To which the king replied, "No, this is not good!" and proceeded to send his friend to jail.

About a year later, the king was hunting in an area that he should have known to stay clear of. Cannibals captured him and took him to their village. They tied his hands, stacked some wood, set up a stake and bound him to the stake.

As they came near to set fire to the wood, they noticed that the king was missing a thumb. Being superstitious, they never ate anyone who was less than whole. So untying the king, they sent him on his way.

As he returned home, he was reminded of the event that had taken his thumb and felt remorse for his treatment of his friend. He went immediately to the jail to speak with his friend.

"You were right," he said, "it was good that my thumb was blown off." And he proceeded to tell the friend all that had just happened. "And so, I am very sorry for sending you to jail for so long. It was bad for me to do this."

"No," his friend replied, "This is good!"

"What do you mean, 'This is good'?"

How could it be good that I sent my friend to jail for a year?"

"If I had not been in jail, I would have been with you."

This reminds us of Romans 8:28 "*We know that in all things God works for the good of those*

who love Him."

(Read Scripture Passage - Habakkuk 1:1-5; 3:17-19 - Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Hab)

When going through difficult time - easy to say: "Have faith anyway" - glib

Jas 2:15,16 Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it?

"You might lose your job?" "Just found out you have cancer?"

"You're losing your home?" "Your salary getting cut?"

"Your son just got into trouble & got arrested?" - *Have faith anyway.*

Enough Nuclear bombs to blow up the world,

Pirates hi-jacking ships,

The economy is in the tank and our money be spent for generations to come,

People being scared into believing the world to end with global warming;

Rogue nations trying to build nuclear bombs,

Extremist Muslims trying to take over the world... - *Have faith anyway.*

What does it mean to have faith in a world that seems headed for destruction?

What are we supposed to do to fulfill God's purpose?

Look for answers in Habakkuk. - written about 2,600 yrs ago in time of crises & danger for Hebrew people

A book about Habakkuk's struggle to understand what God was doing - extraordinary faith

Habakkuk had a vision (oracle) of a conversation with God, about what God planned to do about the violence and injustice in Judah.

After studying this prophet, an author, Kent Keith, came up with a * "Paradoxical Commandment."

The world is full of violence, injustice, starvation, disease, and environmental destruction. Have faith anyway.

We want to learn from Habakkuk how to have faith even when our world (personal or global) seems headed for disaster.

Where is God? How can God allow this?

These questions - common to man for centuries.

Hebrew prophet, Habakkuk, asked them 2,600 yrs ago.

Vision of asking God these questions and he got some answers - not what he was expecting.

He responded with a wonderful affirmation.

Know very little about Habakkuk

Lived about 700 years B.C.

Same time as prophets: Nahum, Zephaniah, and Jeremiah

Turbulent time

After reign of Solomon, Israel split into two kingdoms

Northern - Israel

Southern - Judah

Both kingdoms dominated and destroyed - overtaken by Assyrians, Egyptians, then Babylonians

*Israel conquered in 721 B.C.

Judah, 20 yrs later by Assyria - Jerusalem left in tact, allowed to self govern

Pay heavy taxes to Assyria

King Josiah - reforms made, became more independent (640-609 B.C.), expanded Judah

Meanwhile the Babylonian empire expanded and defeated the Assyrian force. (612 B.C.)

Egyptians saw opportunity and moved through Judah to fight the Babylonians. (609 B.C.)

King Josiah tried to stop them and was killed.

Judah became vassal of Egyptians who placed Jehoiakim on the throne - petty tyrant

Babylonians then defeated Egyptians (605 B.C.) - Jehoiakim conceded & became vassal of Bab

Jehoiakim rebelled - Babylonian army marched on Jerusalem just after Jehoiakim died.

New king Jehoiachin surrendered.

Beginning of exile in Babylon. Thousands taken to Babylon.

Jerusalem destroyed in 587 B.C. Killed many people, ruined economy. Kingdom of Judah destroyed

Persia (modern day Iran) conquered Babylon (539-538 B.C.)

Persian leader Cyrus the Great allowed Judeans to return to homeland.

The book of Habakkuk probably written sometime during reign of Jehoiakim (609 - 598 B.C.)

After fall of Assyrians and before Jerusalem was destroyed by the Babylonians

The coming invasion by the Babylonians was revealed to Habakkuk in his vision.

Book of Habakkuk has 3 chapters. First two, Habakkuk makes 2 complaints - God answers both
Third chapter is a prayer recalling God's glory - powerful affirmation of faith.

Habakkuk loved God, but he was not happy with God. Things were not right and he turned to God and complained. First complaint - God didn't seem to be doing anything about the violence and injustice in Judah.

Hab 1:2-4 How long, O LORD, must I call for help, but you do not listen? Or cry out to you, "Violence!" but you do not save? Why do you make me look at injustice? Why do you tolerate wrong? Destruction and violence are before me; there is strife, and conflict abounds. Therefore the law is paralyzed, and justice never prevails. The wicked hem in the righteous, so that justice is perverted.

Habakkuk had courage to ask God some honest questions. God doesn't approve of violence and injustice - but it continued all over the place.

Why? How long? Why didn't God answer? What was God doing?

Did you ever ask God these kind of questions? Why is there so much violence in the world?

Terrorist attacks & more threats

War in Middle East - more to come

Genocide in Bosnia, Rwanda, Sudan

Earthquakes, hurricanes, tsunamis, floods & fires around world, oil spills

HIV virus killing millions

Corruption in governments here and around the world

What are you doing about it God!? Where are you? We don't see the divine plan. We're hurting!

God answered - wicked would be punished - answer was a surprise to Habakkuk.

(Read) Hab 1:5-11

God told Habakkuk that He was, in fact, working - but not the way Habakkuk wanted/expected. God was raising the Babylonians to be His instrument of punishment. - Ruthless army to punish the people of Judah for their sins against God.

People of God were not following Him - going the way of the world, doing what pleased them. Everyone else was doing it, seemingly with no consequences.

Today, because of politically correct environment, no one can speak out against anything. Homosexual lifestyle promoted non-stop; sex outside of marriage seems the norm - SIN

Example - T.V. show "Bones" young lady breaks off with boyfriend to have relationship with girl

Everyone is ok with it - even a Muslim man. Break up - all console her - even Muslim. She returns to old boyfriend and sleeps with him - conversation about "living in the moment"

We look around and wonder - does God care?

God's answer was unexpected, but also fearful. Judeans would be conquered by ruthless Babylon

Sometimes we pray with a particular answer in mind - surprised when we hear something else. We want God to do what we think is right - we are the "good guys". God may have another plan.

Habakkuk not happy with God's answer.

Second complaint: **(Read) Habakkuk 1:12-13**

Habakkuk - shocked - "Are you kidding. God, really? What are you thinking. This isn't like you. Yes, Judeans may have been wicked and violent - but the Babylonians!?! They're far worse. Judeans are more righteous than they are!"

Babylonians had habit of wiping a people out. God had made promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Israel to preserve them. Was He going to break that promise now?

(Read: page 15 of "Have Faith Anyway")

SO WHAT?

Is God really on the throne? - The answer is yes. He knows what He's doing.

Story:

I heard a story about a train traveling through the night in a very violent rainstorm. The lightning flashes were almost blinding, the rain hitting the windows was deafening and the strong gust winds rocked the train from side to side. When the lightning flashed and lighted up the darkness, the passengers could see the rising water along the tracks. This created terror in the

minds of the passengers. Several passengers noted that through all the noise, lightening and wind, one of the passengers, a little girl, seemed to be at perfect peace. The adult passengers couldn't figure out why the little girl was so calm during all this excitement. Finally, one passenger asked her, "How is that you can be so calm when all the rest of us are so worried about what might or could happen?" The little passenger smiled and said, "My father is the engineer."

Ps 42:7-11 Deep calls to deep in the roar of your waterfalls; all your waves and breakers have swept over me.... I say to God my Rock, "Why have you forgotten me? Why must I go about mourning, oppressed by the enemy?" My bones suffer mortal agony as my foes taunt me, saying to me all day long, "Where is your God?" Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.

God is still the engineer. He knows what he is doing. We may not understand.
We must trust Him.

Example: War in Middle East - Outcry for going into Iraq

I see God's bigger picture! This was the most difficult area of the world to get the Gospel into.

10/40 Window

Mt 24:14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

Conclusion

We know that our world has truly become a fearful place. But if we have faith, we can stay connected with God and live the way Jesus taught us to live. We can love each other, help each other, and respect each other as the children of God. We can come together and be a part of the building of His new Kingdom. It won't be easy, but as we move forward, we can be inspired by the example of Habakkuk. He shows us that whatever happens, we can rejoice in the Lord and *have faith anyway*.

Why? Because He is Sovereign. He knows what He's doing. He's proved it over and over again. That's one reason we have the Scriptures - to be reminded of God's work/faithfulness/sovereignty.

People in this world are living without hope. They see all the same stuff we do, but no where to turn. God says to us, "Go, make disciples as you go in My strength and with My message."

In the midst of turbulent times, God is saying to us through His word, "Hang in there, have faith anyway."

Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.

Next week we will look at how God answered Habakkuk and how he was reminded that everything is in God's time, not ours.