

D. I leave you with the encouragement from Habakkuk that God cares for you. I found the following lessons in a study we did from this book a few years ago. Perhaps they will bless you today:

1. Keep God at the center of your life. When you have doubts and questions like Habakkuk, do what he did – take them to God. So many people never take their doubts or cares to God. Instead they harbor them and let them grow bigger and bigger until they are overwhelming. Never leave God out of your problems.

2. The heart of the problem is usually a problem of the heart. That's not meant to make you feel guilty; it's meant to remind you that God cares about the heart first. That's true when you look out at those troubled souls around you; and it's true when you look in at your own sorrows. Let God hold you close to his heart. Feel his heart beat of love. Keep your heart on fire for him.

3. Live by promises, not explanations. That's what Habakkuk learned by waiting and developing patience. You know there are over 7,000 promises in the Bible? While must not presume on God's goodness, we can always count on his promises for wisdom, strength, resources, help, assurance, and grace.

Lean in to God; trust him with all your heart. Claim this promise: "For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

"Faith Always Trumps Sight"
Habakkuk

6/06/10

RMBC
Pastor Dennis

Introduction

A. Do some of you remember the old fire show in Yosemite? At dusk people would gather and wait expectantly on the valley floor. Finally in the stillness a ranger a thousand feet above would call "Are you ready?" And below the call echoed back, "We're ready. Let the fire fall!" Soon workers shoveled red-hot embers over the ledge in a free-falling fire show as people watched in amazement!

B. In II Chron. 7:1 we read, "When Solomon had finished praying fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the Lord filled the temple." That must have been another spectacular sight – a man prays and fire falls from heaven. That's powerful praying!

C. Habakkuk, the prophet we look in on this morning, wasn't so fortunate. When he prayed it felt like nothing happened. Instead of fire falling prayers were falling on deaf ears. Hab 1:2-4 immediately puts us in touch with the prophet's dilemma (Read).

D. If there is a prophet with whom most of us can identify, it's Habakkuk -- except for his name which no one is sure how to pronounce. (There was also an Assyrian plant called "habakuku" which is how Habakkuk felt part of the time.)

But we relate to Habakkuk for several reasons:

1. His times were so much like ours: Things were not well in the nation of Judah at the end of the 7th century B.C. The economy was in the tank, politicians were on the doll, and violence was rampant. The Jerusalem times read like the Fresno Bee – report after report of conflicts between people and nations.

2. His faith was challenged so much like ours: Not only did it seem like his prayers were not being answered, when they were God answered in such surprising ways. As a result Habakkuk asks questions like:

How long? How come? Why now? What's this? He asks,
Why does evil go unpunished?
Why, God, are you using those more evil to judge those less evil?
Why do bad things happen to good people?
Why do the ungodly get by with their deeds and even prosper?

3. His relationship with God is just what we need. Habakkuk wonders without really wavering? He has doubts without deviating from his faith. He doesn't understand but he never gives in to unbelief – and that is crucial in maintaining faith in difficult times. Habakkuk was someone who walked and talked with God.

Responding to Faith Testing

A. Habakkuk gives us a great model for facing frustrating times. Remember, there is a difference between testing and temptation in our life. Temptation is from the enemy, the devil, and it's intended to harm us (discourage, defeat and destroy). Testing, on the other hand, is from God and is intended to build us up in our faith; to deepen our trust in God's love, care, guidance, and wisdom.

B. Here is a model for facing faith challenges and tests:

1. Slow Down: 2:1a In times of testing it is easy to become frantic with the need for a solution. That's not always the most helpful. Habakkuk decides to stop and think which requires slowing your pace, your heart rate, and your need for action. It's the biblical equivalent of "counting to ten" before reacting.

I recall, as a student, having anxiety attacks while taking a test. I would look over at my buddy who was writing like mad, and I'd start sweating bullets. I knew most of the answers, but I got stuck and almost froze for a few moments. I had to stop, think, and pray my way through. That can be true in the big tests of life as well.

2. Step Back: 1:12 In this verse and several following Habakkuk reviews some things he knows are true about God: God's nature (he is everlasting), God's character (he is holy), and so on. In doing that he gets his mind off of his problem and back onto God. It takes practice and discipline to do that when you face a faith test, but it can be a great source of comfort.

This is one reason I advocate scripture memory. When you hide God's Word in your heart it is always available. You can mentally click on that file, open the box and spend a few moments reviewing the nature of God. I've memorized verses on six topics that help me rely on God's resources: His Spirit, his strength, his peace, his faithfulness, his provision, and his help in temptation.

3. Go Deeper: 2:1b Once you have your mind on God you can begin to bring the attributes of God to bear on the problem. Habakkuk had a problem with what felt like unanswered prayer. Once he had the nature of God in mind, he could begin to bring his knowledge of God into focus and apply that to the problem.

The beauty in this encounter is that God rewarded him – with an answer. Habakkuk says "I will look to see what he will say," and God begins to reveal his answer to this prophet (vs. 2:1ff)

4. Dig In: 2:3, 3:16 There will be times when God asks you to be patient. This idea of waiting is like a summary of the previous steps. If Habakkuk starts out with an almost bitter complaint (vs. 1:2-4), he ends with one of the beautiful faith statements of scripture (vs. 17-18).

Some of you can read those verses and literally join Habakkuk in his commitment of faith. You grow olives, grapes and figs; you work with sheep and cattle. Others of us can substitute other words – other crops or other sources of God's provision: money in the bank, jobs on the line, clients in the office, customers at the door, or accounts in the file. You insert the word that measures if you are running on empty or is a sign that your tank is full.

Walking by Faith, Not by Sight

A. I want to remind you that the lessons of Habakkuk are powerful and relevant. This exchange between a prophet and God can help you in your struggles; it can lift you above your fears about today and tomorrow.

B. Here's the deal, if all we do is look out at our world today we will get discouraged. All we will see are setbacks and hardships. The lamp of our life will grow dim as we see how hard life can be. But as a believer, it is really hard to remain a pessimist.

Don't miss the central verse of this book, Hab. 2:4, "the righteous will live by his faith." It is faith in a God who never tires, who never sleeps, who never runs out of resources, who never abandons us, who is full of mercy, who is boundless in love, and who is unlimited in power that lifts us out of the pit of self-pity and sets us back on the road of redemption.

As long as we walk only by sight we will falter, but faith always trumps sight. Faith is always greater than the limited vision we have because faith gives us God's perspective.

C. Ann Warner was the woman who wrote that much loved song, "Jesus Loves Me." Her father had been a wealthy powerbroker in New York City when the market crash of 1837 wiped out his business. For the rest of her life Ann Warner lived with great financial pressures and overwhelming debt. In spite of that great disappointment she wrote those words we love to sing: Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so. Little ones to him belong. They are weak but he is strong."

As Ann visited with a friend one day she took a fragile shell from a shelf. It was so delicate that it looked like lacework. With tears she told her friend, "One day I was so perplexed with bills that needed paying and needs mounting around me. On that day I received this delicate shell. And as I held it I realized that if God could make this beautiful home for a little creature, he would take care of me."

June 6, 2010 -- Habakkuk

Teacher: Pastor Dennis

Central Message: The just shall live by faith. Habakkuk 2:4b

Verse to Highlight: "For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

Habakkuk 2:14

Sermon Title: "Faith Always Trumps Sight"

Outline of Habakkuk:

- The Burden – Chapter 1
- The Vision – Chapter 2
- A Prayer – Chapter 3

Study Notes:

Why we relate so well to Habakkuk:

1. His _____ were so much like ours
2. His _____ was challenged so much like ours
3. His _____ to God is just what we need

Habakkuk's Model for Facing Times of Testing

Note: Temptation – from our enemy meant to _____ us

Testing – from God meant to _____ us

1. Slow Down 2:1
2. Step Back 1:12
3. Go Deeper 2:1b
4. Dig In 2:3, 3:16
(3:17-18)

Encouragement from Habakkuk

1. Keep God at the _____ of your life
2. The _____ of the problem is often a problem of the _____
3. Live by _____ not by explanations