

Remnant Life Church
June 24, 2018
Navigating the Turbulent Waters
Habakkuk 1:1-6

Amid the storms raging in our nation today, how should we live?

The Prophet

- We know little than what is revealed in the book itself
 - In 1:1 and 3:1 he calls himself “the prophet”
 - Possibly schooled in the OT law at a prophetic school which had been operating in the days of Samuel
 - Or a priest who performed regular priestly duties (3:19b – the conclusion of his prayer that would have been sung - ...*for the director of music. On my stringed instruments.*)

The Setting

- Saul begins his reign in approximately 1050 BC, through David and then Solomon ending after 120 years in 930
 - The nation then divides into a northern kingdom called Israel (10 tribes)
 - Southern kingdom of 2 tribes - Judah and Benjamin
- Over the next 208 years Israel (northern kingdom) is ruled by 19 kings and every one of them is evil in the sight of God
 - It is captured in 722 BC by the Assyrian army
 - It would be 2770 years before Israel would become a nation again
- The southern kingdom (Judah) did have godly kings through their history but, even so, more than half of her 20 kings were evil in their 344 years of existence
 - Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem in 586 BC and carried off the people into captivity or exile (prophets and writings of Daniel; Ezekiel; Jeremiah)

The Time

- The time of the writing is a little bit easier to determine
 - 3 times the imminent invasion of the Babylonians is mentioned (1:6; 2:1; 3:16)
 - The first of two times the Babylonians invaded Jerusalem
 - Once on a smaller scale in 605 BC which is the time of Habakkuk
 - Total destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC
 - This places Habakkuk’s writing sometime during the first 5 years of the reign of King Jehoiakim who was followed by Jehoiachin

READ – Habakkuk 1:1-6

- Habakkuk’s name means to “embrace” or “wrestle”
 - His name fits the tone and content of his book as he “wrestles” with, not only the sin of God’s people, but why God has not done something about it

- It has only about 115 years since Assyria captured the northern kingdom of Israel, but sin is continuing unabated,
 - Isaiah was the prophet in Judah when that happened to Israel and he writes in the 56 and 57th chapters of the consequences of bad leadership that God then has to send judgment (*Isa 57:12-13a*)
- Habakkuk does not understand why God continues to allow the sin to go unpunished and unchanged

Habakkuk “reminds” God of the condition of the nation and its people -

- **Verse 2** - *How long, LORD, must I call for help, but you do not listen? Or cry out to you, “Violence!” but you do not save?*
 - Habakkuk has evidently been praying a long time regarding the sin of the people
 - He has come to the place where he is not even sure God hears him
 - The prophet is hurting to the core of his being regarding the sin of God’s people
 - Everyone, at one time or another, feels as if something in their life is, or could be, overwhelming
 - There are some Christians who will claim they do not have any problems that require the intense prayer we read here
 - They are either...
 - Not telling the truth
 - Not growing and experiencing real life
 - They are living in a full state of denial and refuse to acknowledge the realities of living in the world today
 - Struggles and difficulties are a part of our lives because of sin
 - *Matt 13* – the parable of the sower
 - *13:20* – *When trouble or persecution comes...*
 - Christians will most often respond to the trials of everyday life in 1 of 3 ways:
 - Resigned to just living with the struggles, learning to live with their effect, and just getting by each day as best they can (Eek-Christians)
 - Others become cynical and hardened; defensive and always ready to attack first in order to protect themselves
 - But there are also those who get into the ring every day and wrestle through each of them calling on God as their help, their strength, and their joy
 - *James 1:2-4* - *Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.*
- **Verse 3** - *Why do you make me look at injustice? Why do you tolerate wrongdoing? Destruction and violence are before me; there is strife, and conflict abounds.*
 - This verse could be taken from the front page of any newspaper in America or any news web site
 - Injustice can best be described by 2 questions you will often hear:
 - Why do bad things happen to good people?

- Why do the evil prosper?
 - We must change our definition of prosperity
 - Remove financial gain as the measuring stick
 - *Prov. 21:6 - A fortune made by a lying tongue is a fleeting vapor and a deadly snare.*
 - Habakkuk speaks of strife and conflict in their time
 - Has there been a time in our history when our nation has been more divided?
 - The Civil War in the 1860's; the heightened racial tension of the 1960's; and today a nation that would appear to be coming apart
- *Verse 4 - Therefore (or, because of all this) the law is paralyzed, and justice never prevails. The wicked hem in the righteous, so that justice is perverted.*
 - Justice is perverted – the laws of the land are now being ignored and being used as a tool to accomplish a particular objective
 - Illegal immigration – what part of the word “illegal” is suddenly confusing so many people?
 - *Isa 5:20 - Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter.*
 - This is the time we live today, just as Habakkuk did over 2700 years ago
 - And we are still asking the same primary question that Habakkuk did
 - WHERE ARE YOU GOD?!?

The rest of the book...

- In verses 5 – 11 God answers Habakkuk
- In verses 12 – 17 Habakkuk again complains about what is happening and ask God why He does not intervene
- Then in Chapter 2 God responds again and clearly lays out to the prophet that He does know what is going on and, as proof, details the sins of the Babylonians through a series of 5 “woes”
- The book concludes with the prayer of Habakkuk in the 3rd chapter exalting God and His power over the nations

Three things to consider as we attempt to navigate the turbulent waters -

1. All thinking Christians must deal with the problem of evil
 - a. *John 16:33 – “...In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”*
 - b. The world's thinkers cannot understand this verse
 - c. Allow me to introduce you to a sylllogism (an argument that has a primary premise; a secondary premise; and is then followed by a conclusion)
 - i. If God is all-powerful and loving, He would put a stop to evil. Evil has not been stopped. Therefore, either God is not all-powerful, or He is not loving.
 - ii. This is what the world thinks of God
 - d. In his book Why Bad Things Happen to Good People, the author, Harold Kushner argued that God is loving, He just isn't able to stop the evil

- e. Neither of these is right but many Christians, to some degree, fall into this kind of thinking by saying that God permitted evil by giving man free will, but He did not ordain or cause it.
 - i. The problem with that is if God created man and free will, knowing that Adam would plunge mankind into sin, then it must be under His divine will
 - ii. If you deny God's will is at the cause of all things, then you fall into dualism which believes that the power of sin and evil is equal to or even greater than God
 - iii. Dealing with the problem of evil is not defined by our understanding or comprehension
 - iv. It is defined by the measure of our faith and trust in our loving, merciful, and gracious God

2. Use those struggles with evil (and even our inability to comprehend them) to draw you closer to God, not cause you to withdraw
 - a. Did Habakkuk withdraw in the face of the wickedness that was all around him?
 - b. No – he took it to God, was honest as he cried out, and waited for God to answer
 - c. Can we be truly honest with God when we pray?
 - i. Jesus was very honest with His Father in the Garden of Gethsemane
 - ii. David was honest with God in His prayers when King Saul was trying to catch and kill him
 - iii. Elijah was honest with God when he was hiding in a cave from Jezebel
 - d. God's answers did not always bring understanding or even comfort ([Hab. 1:5-11](#))
 - e. But they did bring the circumstances into the proper perspective of God's might and power regardless of the physical circumstances

3. Even as we, like Habakkuk, cannot understand the evil raging around us, our responsibility is to pray, not enter into the sin of what is happening, but to be a light in a dark place, and find our joy in the Lord
 - a. Again, we do not withdraw
 - b. Our nation desperately needs godly, spirit-filled, selfless leaders
 - c. But we cannot be those who add fuel to the fire
 - i. You say, "I'm just one voice, what difference can I make?"
 1. So was John the Baptist and look what God commissioned him to do
 2. So was Billy Graham and God used him to preach the Word to millions
 - ii. Like the little boy with the loaves and fishes, just give God what you have and He will multiply it to accomplish His will

Navigating the storms means that we deal with the evil, we draw closer to God, and we refuse to contribute to the hate and division

- Be a light in a dark place
- And show the power of God's love to heal wherever He takes you!