

LifeWay Family Bible Series for July 25: Be faithful even when times are tough-God is_71204

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Be faithful even when times are tough-God is

Habakkuk 1:2-6, 12-13; 2:2-4, 18-20; 3:17-19

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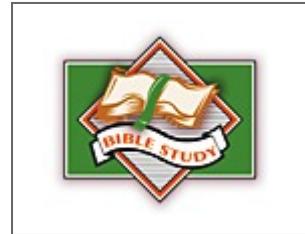
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Can you quote a passage from Habakkuk? I bet you can. Paul used one in his letter to the Romans. He quoted Habakkuk 2:4 in Romans 1:17. It was the text for his letter to the Romans. It was a sermon on faith. He said, "For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: 'The righteous will live by faith.'"

Habakkuk saw a problem. What he saw was a nation, his own nation, which seemed to have turned its back on God. They had made justice a joke. Good folks could not get a fair shake in life. Citizens were not acting like God's chosen people.

He took his complaint to the right spot. He took it to God. God told

Habakkuk he was doing something about the problem. He was raising up the Babylonians to punish his own errant folks. Already, the Babylonians were gobbling up nations faster than Baptists can finish off a pot luck dinner.



This seemed to Habakkuk like God was using a sorrier nation to punish a more just people. He again complained to God. "Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrong. Why then do you tolerate the treacherous? Why are you silent while the wicked swallow up those more righteous than themselves?" (Habakuk 1:13).

Habakkuk was playing a dangerous game. His two-prong strategy to win this match with God was to deny him sovereignty and to play comparative ethics with the Babylonians. God can't choose to use a people who aren't as good as us! God can! And he did!

God also told Habakkuk he was well aware of the shortcomings of the Babylonians. They would not escape his judgment. The time would come for them as well. It was not Habakkuk's place to condemn his Chaldean neighbors. God alone is the judge of the earth.

It was not Habakkuk's place to question God's actions. It was not his place to judge the nations. The only thing God asked of the prophet and his people was their faithfulness. "If you live by faith, you will really live."

God sees the bigger picture. He chose a people to be his people. He asked them to be faithful to him alone. They turned their backs on their promise to serve him. When they did, God did not give up on them. He still reached

out to them in love. It is the story of the Old Testament prophets. God sent them to his wounded people with a healing word. Babylon would yet be judged. God would return in his time, and his people would again be blessed.

In the meantime, God has a word for Habakkuk. He has a word for us, too. "The righteous will live by faith." God's instructions have not changed.

What do modern-day Ha-bakkus do when the world seems to spin off its moral axis? What do they do when good people are oppressed by evil empires? What do they do when the unrighteous swallow up the righteous? They stay faithful. They keep on believing God.

What does it mean to have faith in God? It means to take him at his word. It means we can count on him to keep his promises. We can trust him. It means to remember that he is God and we are not.

What does it mean to have faith in God? It means we can wait on him and know he will answer us with his presence. The God of all the earth will indeed do what is right. His grace is not slow. It is on time. God's time!

What does it mean to have faith in God? It means we not only believe his word, we do his word. Whether we feel like it or not, we obey what God has said. Habakkuk needs to stop complaining about what God will do and start obeying what God has already said. He does not stand alone in this. Modern-day Christians need to stop filling up some mythical complaint box and start looking for areas of ministry God already has provided.

Habakkuk got the message. Listen to his words. He said, "Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior" (Habakkuk 3:17-18).

This sounds to me like a man who has learned to trust God. He will believe God's word. He will do God's word. He will wait on God's deliverance. Sounds like a good plan of action. May we do the same until Jesus comes again.

Questions for discussion

- ◆ Does anything in Habakkuk's time sound familiar with today's world?
- ◆ What alternative do we have to complaining to God and telling him what needs to be fixed?
- ◆ What does it mean to have faith in God?
- ◆ Is there an area of ministry that God keeps bringing back to your mind that you have repeatedly put off?

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