

Living with Loss – Wrestling with God

2020 didn't start out this way, but with Covid hitting the world, we were all thrown into pandemic mode:

- Trying to figure out what this disease really was.
- How bad was it, could it really become a world-wide pandemic?

After it took its effects, how are we going to keep our jobs, our kids in school, make it through the economic & health crisis it caused?

- When will it really be over and we return back to some sense of normal.
- Is the vaccine safe enough?

How many people have had to wrestle with God?

How many have been disappointed with God?

- He didn't come through for you in 2020 like you wanted or needed or hoped and believed Him to.
- **You're not alone** – the Bible has many stories and examples of good people, God's people of faith that situations and circumstances in life did not turn out like they wanted – expected – believed for.
- People who felt let down by Deity, felt abandoned, felt confused, felt like God wasn't there and didn't come through when they needed Him.

Many have experienced this not just over small events of their life; but when things were important and significant and most meaningful in life.

This was the question of Job – “Why do the righteous suffer?”

- This is the age old question and puzzle of why good people experience bad things.
- Even Job's friends and wife couldn't help him. Sometimes no one can help us in the questions we have. Only trust in the Lord will get us through.

We come to those times when the words:

“His thoughts are not our thoughts, nor are His ways our ways.” Are very real!

Isa. 55:8 “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, says the Lord.”

- His ways are not the ways we planned things to work out.

These are real questions we have to answer.

Habakkuk 1:2 “**How long**, O Lord, will I call for help and You will not hear? I cry out to You, violence! Yet You do not save.”

- How long do I have to pray about this, talk to You about this, plead with You over this – and Heaven is silent?
- **Why?** V.3 “ Why do You make me see iniquity, and cause me to look on wickedness? Destruction and violence are before me; strife exists and contention arises.”
- Isn't this your question today? WHY?

Habakkuk was affected and infected by his confusion:

Hab. 3:16 “I heard and my inward parts trembled, at the sound my lips quivered. Decay enters my bones, and in my place I tremble. Because I must wait quietly for the day of distress, for the people to arise who will invade us.”

- Habakkuk was unraveling, coming apart.
- I tremble at the outlook of what I see coming.
- He is a man – prophet of God who is hurting deeply.

The backdrop of Habakkuk is that God is bringing judgment on His people because of their idolatry and He's bringing the Babylonians to bring the judgment.

- The prophet is struggling with the fact of impending judgment.
- But what really causes him to struggle is that God is going to use a nation that is more wicked than Israel is.
- He can't figure out God's thinking/perspective.

2:20 “But the Lord is in His holy temple. Let all the earth be silent before Him.”

- In plain language, this is saying to you and me: **In all your talking, you will not figure this out!**
- With all the talking, crying, complaining, weeping – you won't be able to figure it out.
- In the 42 chapters of Job, it's all talk and they can't figure out what the Lord is doing!
- Job has no clear revelation in chapter 42 than in chapter 1 of why he's in the situation he's in.

So Habakkuk is struggling with the why question, the how long question, and the not being able to figure it out – and all he can do is be silent!

The secular world offers many solutions to the times when life doesn't make sense:

- A **resignation** to just accept the situation because there is nothing I can do about my despair. It will just be what it will be. It is what it is approach!
- **A detachment** “I don't want to think about it or deal with it, so I'll find something to distract myself from it.”
 - Amusement, entertainment, substances, relationships, something so I don't have to think about or face the issue – distraction of another mental zone.
 - Sleep, so I don't have to face it.
 - The problem with detachment is that your despair knows how to work around it, seep in when lapses come, bring back to mind when you don't expect it.
 - So you have to stay busy finding more ways to escape the despair.
- **Bravado approach** Hold your chin up, you're stronger than this, you can lick this, it's not that bad, and you're going to beat this.
- A determination to overcome this.

Habakkuk offers another approach to face your disappointment when you're frustrated and even angry with God:

- In the moments we are trying to be respectful and honest with God, Habakkuk helps us out-
Hab. 3:17-19 “Though the fig tree should not blossom and there be no fruit on the vines, though the yield of the olive should fail and the fields produce no food, though the flock should be cut off from the fold and there be no cattle in the stalls,
- Though all the things of life that sustain us are bleak, and it's not working out.
- Though this is the reality of my situation -

YET I WILL EXULT IN THE LORD, I WILL REJOICE IN THE GOD OF MY SALVATION, THE LORD IS MY STRENGTH, AND HE HAS MADE MY FEET LIKE THE HIND'S FEET, AND MAKES ME WALK ON MY HIGH PLACES.”

Focus on two words:

The situation is bleak, barren and hopeless. Circumstances are out of his control due to no rain.

- This is circumstances out of his control and he can't do a thing about it or do any better.
1. Habakkuk says: “**I will**”

- “I will” is his decision to go against how he feels.
- He’s got questions and no answers, he’s under stress – these are his real emotions.
- No food, rock bottom, flocks gone – but he makes a choice “**I will.**”
- There are times when faith and feelings do get along/partners/working together; but there are times when faith and feelings get divorced.
- Your will must always be the engine – your emotions must always be the caboose.
- When the caboose tries to pull the train, your journey is in trouble.
- This is because you can’t always control how you feel – feelings change all the time based on influences of impact of circumstances, changes, and situations – feelings can be all over the place.
- How you feel is real – emotions can never be dismissed or ignored.

But what Habakkuk did was make a decision even though his emotions were real and tough to deal with – he said: “**I will**”

- In spite of unanswered questions of why, how long, and what; I will make a decision of “**I will exult in the Lord, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation.**”
- I will make a choice to praise Him anyhow!
- Not to praise Him for what I’m feeling, but to praise Him in the midst of what I’m going through.

When you feel disappointed and let down and your prayers are not answered and you’re looking to your feelings to give you the motivation to praise Him; you’re looking in the wrong place.

It’s through your praise to Him that you will find the help and strength you need.

- Feelings can’t be trusted to give you what you need.
- What you get through a message, song or someone else’s word, it is temporary and when you get home will not be sufficient for you.
- You can’t piggy back off some else, you have to deal with your own will – **I Will!**

2. Habakkuk says: I will **Rejoice** Celebrate the God of my salvation:

The result of his celebration of rejoicing:

- With his celebration comes a change of focus.
- Habakkuk has denied his problem, but he has shifted his focus
- “I’m going to focus on the God of my salvation.”

Job 38-42 God describes how great He is, but Job doesn't understand until he comes to the place where he personally encounters the Lord for himself.

42:5-6 "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear; but now my eye sees You; therefore I retract, and I repent in dust and ashes."

His God focus didn't change his problem, but changed his perspective in the midst of the problem.

What happened when Habakkuk and Job, in spite of their circumstances; by their will began to praise the Lord?

Hab. 3:19 "The Lord God is my strength"

- Despair, by its nature brings weakness into your life: Mental, spiritual, physical.
- Strength didn't come because his circumstance changed, strength came because God entered into his situation.
- Same for you today, if you praise Him in the midst of your circumstances – HIS strength will come to you.
- **In your despair don't fall into the trap of drawing from Him, but drawing to Him.**

James 4:8 "Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you."

We all have WHY questions, and the Lord doesn't always give answers or explain Himself; but He does promise to strengthen us when we trust Him and praise Him and honor Him as the God of our salvation.