

"There's Something to Think About" Ep. 11 Habakkuk: God's Great Mission

Another of ancient Israel's prophets, Jeremiah, asked the question that comes often to the mind of the faithful, "Lord, why do the wicked prosper?"

The soul disturbing experience of the wicked gaining the world's good in defiance of God and the righteous suffering for serving God is an ancient complaint. David's Psalm 37 opens with these words,

Psalm 37:1 Fret not yourself because of evildoers; be not envious of wrongdoers!

He repeats this same admonition three times in the Psalm, but the entire Psalm is an explanation of how God handles those who seem to prosper in their wickedness.

Habakkuk asks the same question, only a little differently. Habakkuk wants to know how God can use a wicked nation like Babylon to punish His own people. The dialogue between Habakkuk and God goes something like this:

H: God, I'm crying out to you. Are you listening? It's pretty bad here. The wicked surround the righteous.

G: Habakkuk open your eyes. I am doing something so amazing that even if I told you, you wouldn't believe it. I am going to use the wicked and dreaded Babylonians to punish my people for their covenant breaking ways.

H: Say what! How can you, so pure you cannot even look on sin and wickedness, why would you idly look at the nations and are silent when the wicked swallows up the man more righteous than he? I mean, seriously, Lord, we're bad, true, but the Babylonians are worse! I don't understand!

God: Write down what I am showing you, Habakkuk and wait for it to be fulfilled, because what I say will come to pass. In the meantime, here is what you need to know, the righteous shall live by his faith.

That phrase is used three times in the New Testament. Paul uses it once in the opening chapter of Romans and once halfway through the letter to the Galatians. It is also repeated in Hebrews 10:35-39,

35 Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward.

36 For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised. 37 For, "Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay; 38 but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he

shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him.” 39 But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.

Here is the message for us from Habakkuk today: God works His great mission in the world today, even using the wicked to accomplish the goals for His glory. It is the privilege and responsibility of the faithful, the righteous, those who put their trust in Jesus to maintain their faith and obedience regardless of the condition in which they live.

We live by faith not because we have all the answers, or because life is convenient or easy, or because we have abundant health, wealth, and welfare, or because everything in our lives is going according to our interests or expectations. We live by faith because God is all He says He is, because His will is good, His ways are holy, His wonders are marvelous, His goals are glorious, His purposes are perfect, and there is nothing in this world we desire more than Him.

God reveals His great mission to Habakkuk. He reveals the reason He does what does in the world. God says, “The earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.” Christian, you say you love God, then it is your joy to love what God loves and to work for what God is working for, and that is to see the knowledge of His glory fill the earth.

Habakkuk gets it. He closes His prophecy with a prayer, a commitment worth making in our day:

Habakkuk 3:17–18 ESV  
Though the fig tree should not blossom,  
nor fruit be on the vines,  
the produce of the olive fail  
and the fields yield no food,  
the flock be cut off from the fold  
and there be no herd in the stalls,  
yet I will rejoice in the LORD;  
I will take joy in the God of my salvation.

That is how the righteous live by faith.

Until next time, there’s something to think about.

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