

The Day of Distress

Habakkuk 3:16-18

We've seen how the prophet Habakkuk lived during a day (late 7th century B.C.) when Judah was going through some very difficult and dark times. Habakkuk complains to God in Chapter 1 that the Jews are hateful toward each other (1:2), abusing one another (1:3), and cold toward God and His Law (1:4). God responds by telling Habakkuk that "I am raising up the ruthless Babylonians to discipline My people" (1:6).

God says this 'amazing work' will produce 'good' for His people. Habakkuk then complains about God's wisdom, justice and goodness. How is it fair to use more wicked people to discipline God's people? God responds in 2:4 and tells Habakkuk 'the just shall live by faith', that God is always good to His people. After the Lord then gives more details of how He can work ultimate good out of apparent evil (the rest of Chapter 2), Habakkuk closes his book by recording the prayer that he sang in response to God's report. In these final verses from Habakkuk, we hear his closing thoughts and derive some principles for ourselves.

I. There's a distressful day before me – *"Yet I must wait quietly for **the day of distress**"* (v. 16).

The quietness of the believer is not stoicism – "the endurance of pain without a display of feelings."

The prophet is very descriptive of his feelings as he waits the coming Babylonians to destroy the city.

A. I 'heard' the Lord's report (v. 16) and 'my heart pounded.' – That's an elevation of a heart rate.

B. I 'heard' the Lord's report (v. 16) and 'my lips quivered.' – That's an expression of inner sorrow.

C. I 'heard' the Lord's report (v. 16) and 'decay crept in my bones,' – That's an effort unexpected.

D. I 'heard' the Lord's report (v. 16) and 'my legs trembled.' – That's an emotion of fear.

"Yet I will wait patiently for the day of calamity" (v. 16). It reminds me of "in your (emotion), sin not." How is it possible to expect or experience pain, feel all the emotions of being human, but yet not sin? Remember, the sin of the Jews was *not reflecting the grace, love, forgiveness and goodness of God*.

II. There's a challenging choice within me - *"Though the fig tree should not blossom..."* (v. 17).

The challenge is **making a choice to rejoice** while either *expecting* or *experiencing* the day of distress.

The Hebrew word translated 'exult' comes from the root Hebrew word רָצַח which means "rejoice."

The time to rejoice is now. *"Rejoice in the Lord, always, and I again I say rejoice"* (Philippians 4:4).

Though **(Event)** 'the fig tree should not blossom' **(The Consequence)** – 'no fruit' on the vine (v. 17).

Though **(Event)** 'the yield of the olive should fail' **(The Consequence)** – 'no food' in the pantry (v. 17).

Though **(Event)** 'the flock should be cut off' **(The Consequence)** – 'no cattle' in the stalls (v. 17).

The three events encompass the past and the consequences encompass the present. In all things...

"...Yet I will exult in the LORD" (v. 18).

III. There's a faithful Father over me – *"I will rejoice in the God of my salvation"* (v. 18).

Habakkuk's prayer is a model for all with faith in Christ for what it means to "faith it until you see it."

A. His prayer is personal – *"I will rejoice"* – no matter what others do, "I will rejoice."

B. His prayer is purposeful – *"I will rejoice in the God of my salvation."*

You'll never be able to rejoice in God until you know Him as good, faithful, loving and sovereign.

C. His prayer is powerful – *"I will rejoice in the God of my salvation."*

Imagine how 'deliverance' is seen by Habakkuk in the attack of the Babylonians. It's like those Christians who sing while the flames are burning their flesh while tied to a stake. This world is not my home! I recognize that my salvation is in the hands of my God, and He's given me eternal life.