



### **Habakkuk 3:1-19 -- Adversity Can Develop a Deeper Knowledge of God**

- Pastor Frank Boreham tells of a conversation he had with a parishioner named Jeanie McNab.
  - at one point in the conversation, he said, “But supposing, Jeanie...”
  - she cut him off right there and said, “Now don’t you have anything to do with supposing...
    - I know them all...Suppose I should lose my money...
    - suppose I should lose my health...and all the rest...
    - When those supposings come knocking at your heart, you just slam the door, bolt it, and don’t let any of them in...”
  - I’d like to ask you this morning, is Jeanie right?...is that the best way to deal with potential calamities in your life?...I’m not going to think about it...because if I don’t think about it, it can’t happen?...I’ve had people say that to me in conversations about what would happen after they died...and their response was (however kindly/graciously you asked the question) I don’t want to think about that...I don’t want to talk about that...in other words, no supposing, no supposing...is that the best way to face upcoming challenges?...
  - now, I imagine we’d all agree that that is better than filling your mind with worry...
    - of being torn apart inside with anxiety and fear and worry about things that may or may not come to pass...
  - but we have to figure out some way to prepare ourselves for the challenges that may be coming...
    - suppose the economy doesn’t improve...suppose your candidate isn’t elected...
    - suppose you don’t get into that degree program...suppose your boy/girlfriend is no longer interested...
    - suppose your car breaks down...suppose your bank account’s empty...
    - suppose gas hits 5 bucks a gallon...suppose Iran strikes Israel...
    - suppose your company calls it quits...suppose your marriage isn’t as fulfilling as you’d hoped...
    - suppose your kids go astray...suppose you receive a bad diagnosis...
    - how do people face their greatest fears?...
1. One approach is illustrated by Jeanie McNab...blind detachment...
    - just don’t think about it...
    - the economy is depressing...the housing market is depressing...politics are depressing...
    - so the best solution is to not think about these things at all...
    - fill your life with amusement...or pleasure or material things...but as long as you don’t talk about things or think about things, they won’t happen...
    - no supposing...
    - the problem with that approach is – the challenges are going to come – so you can either choose to be prepared or not, but you can’t will hard times out of your life by some sort of mind control over the future...
  2. A second approach is grim stoicism...a kind of callous resignation...

- everybody suffers...everybody dies...I might as well be resigned to it...
  - there's no way you can be prepared...there's nothing you can do but accept the inevitable...
3. Then there's the sheer bravado crowd...
- get your chin up...face it head on...
  - don't let the future depress you... don't let it get you down...
  - the problem there is that sheer determination doesn't have enough steam to get you through many of life's potential challenges...
    - it's hard to lift your chin when your knees are knocking...
- in fact, this morning, we're going to talk about a man who was very honest about his potential fears...
  - He said...**I hear, and my body trembles; my lips quiver at the sound; rottenness enters into my bones; my legs tremble beneath me.**
  - have you ever felt like that?...and then this man does something that is decidedly "un-Jeanie McNab-like"...he starts supposing...
    - he says...suppose the fig trees don't blossom...and there's no fruit on the vine...
    - suppose the yield of the olive fails...and the fields produce no food...
    - suppose the flock is cut off...and there are no cattle in the stalls...
      - in other words, in their economy...suppose there was no more job, there was no more food, there was no more money or sustenance...then what?...these things hadn't happened yet – but he apparently believed there was some wisdom in having this conversation with himself just in case it did...
      - then he said...Yet will I...do you know what comes next?...we need to...
      - so let me invite you, one last time at least for the purposes of this series, to open your Bible to the book of Habakkuk chapter 3
      - this morning we're completing our 5 week study of the book of Habakkuk...**Seeking God's Plan in Adversity**
  - by now I hope we can think our way through the flow of thought in this book...it's actually one of the shortest books of the OT...and it is possible to get a handle on its message even if you're band new to studying Scripture...
  - Habakkuk was a prophet who was called of God to minister to the southern tribes of Judah around 600 BC...
  - by that, the northern tribes of Israel have been defeated by the nation of Assyria, that had occurred back in 722 BC...
  - and Habakkuk and several other prophets have the ministry assignment of now speaking to the southern tribes and encouraging them to repent and turn back to God before they face a similar fate...
  - the flow of thought in the book is very important...there is much to be gained here about what it means to walk with God...
  - and we've described now 6 major steps in the logic, or flow of thought...you might want to consider them waves that have swept ashore as this story unfolds...
    1. Chapter 1, verses 1-4 – questions from Habakkuk to God about why His people are getting away with their sin...
    2. Then in chapter 1 verses 5-11 – God's answer...that he was actually going to judge His people by allowing them to be defeated by the Babylonians
    3. Then in chapter 1 verse 12 – an important key to all of this...
      - he prophet stops and reminds himself of what he already knows about God and applies it to his specific situation...the theological pause that refreshes...

4. Then the rest of chapter 1 – he asks additional questions – Lord, how could use a nation that is more wicked than Israel to be your instrument of judgment?
5. Then he just pauses in the first verse of chapter 2, and waits...
  - I've asked my questions...now I'm thinking about how I should respond after I'm reproved...
6. That brings us to the sixth wave, the rest of chapter 2, where God tells Habakkuk that the Babylonians too will someday be judged because of their tremendous pride and idolatry...
  - and as hard as that would have been for Habakkuk to believe in light of the way the Babylonian nation was rising to prominence on the world stage...
  - God reminded him in that pivotal verse – chapter 2 verse 4 – The just shall live by faith...

- that discussion ended with these words at the end of chapter 2 – (read)...
- now, we have one more chapter...and Habakkuk has to decide how he is going to respond to all of this...
  - and what we have before us is very, very good news...
  - not all books of the Bible end on a positive note---this one does...
  - Habakkuk carefully prepares a prayer to God...that's the point of the words in verse 1 – “according to Shiggionoth”...we think those were musical notes, referring to particular meter because this prayer is a poem that was designed to be sung by the people of God...
    - so a lot of thought went into this...and these descriptions are unlike anything else in Scripture...
    - but if you listen carefully, you'll pick up on aspects of the history of Israel that Habakkuk is referring to remind God's people of His power and might...let's listen in...**Read 2:20—3:19...**

- we're talking this morning about how **Adversity Can Develop a Deeper Knowledge of God.**
- with the time we have remaining, let's look for **3 principles to help you face future challenges well.**

#### **I. Seek a More Mature Approach to Prayer.**

- one of the great benefits of this book is that we have direct access to the prayer life of one of God's choice servants...
- and it is interesting to...

#### **A. Note the contrast in prayers in this book.**

- chapter 3 sounds different, doesn't it?...
- and as we've pointed out all along, that is not to say that his previous prayers were wrong...
  - I think it is pretty easy to make the case biblically that God invites questions...
  - so please don't think you have to ignore what is bothering you, or try to hide it from the Lord...
  - since He knows your heart anyway, hiding/stuffing/ignoring doesn't make a whole lot of sense...
  - but what you see in chapter 3 is a growing maturity...this conversation has changed Habakkuk for the better...
- aren't you glad that such a potential exists?...that you can get better/stronger/more mature...
- so thank God for where you are now if you're heading in the right direction, but be encouraged that even better days are potentially ahead

- (if time – contrast Peter’s conversations with the Lord early on with his words in the epistles)
- now, let’s break this down a bit – what can we learn from this prayer?...be sure to...

### **B. Put your awe in the right place.**

#### **- v. 2 – I have heard your report and I fear...**

- we do have to make an interpretive decision here because some versions translate this part of verse 2 – “I have heard the reports about You and I fear”...
- others say – no, it’s not “reports about you”...it’s “your reports”...
- the latter seems more likely because it fits the context...
- what was the previous chapter all about?...God’s report...what He intended to do some day to the Babylonians and why...
- and He says – now I get it...now I see how you are going to be able to use the Babylonians for your purposes with your people, but also bring judgment upon their nation for their pride at your time in your way...

#### **- Proverbs 1:7 - The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge...**

- do you see the change in focus?...
  - what was the first prayer in chapter 1 about?...(what was the focus?)...the sin of the people of Judah...
  - what was the focus of the second prayer in chapter 1 (after He learned God was going to use Babylon to judge His people)...the sin of the people of Babylon, along with their terror and their might...
  - there’s no more of that...and that is a significant change...
    - when your prayers focus less on other people’s sin, and other people’s power, and your plans, and your desires...and start focusing on the Person and work of God...that is a sign of maturity...
    - for some of God’s people, prayer isn’t much different than making a grocery list...hello Lord, good to see you this morning, OK, let’s get to the list...
    - (develop – like the commercial customers at Sams – just call ahead, tell them what you want, and they’ll have it ready on carts when you arrive....)....
- Habakkuk says – I’ve heard your report, and I’m not all wrapped up any more in my plans, and my desires, and the shortcomings of other people, or the way they may be able to harm us...
- I’m going to reserve my reverence and awe for the God of heaven...then...

### **C. Focus on the value of His work.**

#### **- Habakkuk 3:2 - ...O LORD, revive Your work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make it known...**

- now, you might say – what “midst of the years” – what’s that about...
- please look over at the second half of verse 16...
- **Habakkuk 3:16 - ...Because I must wait quietly for the day of distress, for the people to arise who will invade us.**
  - Habakkuk knows the Babylonians are coming...
  - and he knows because of Jeremiah’s prophecies, and will know soon, that God’s people will be deported to Babylon for a 70 year captivity...
    - and instead of cursing that, and questioning that---he finally values it...
    - Lord, if that is what it’s going to take to purify your people...
    - if that’s what it’s going to take to magnify yourself and continue your plan...then that’s what I want to...

- [see, not, Lord – why are you allowing the sinfulness of my spouse to continue...but instead...Lord, revive your work in me...]
- [not, Lord, did you know my political candidate might not be elected...but, continue your work in me, and in us, even if we're about to experience judgment at your hand]

- and then don't you love the end of verse 2...

#### **D. Cry out for mercy.**

- **verse 2 – In wrath, remember mercy.**

- do you see how this whole conversation has turned around?...
- at first it was how the people of Judah were more sinful than he...
- then it was how the people of Babylon were more sinful than Judah...
- but now as the focus turns to the holiness of God...all of a sudden it's...we're all in need of your mercy...
- [develop how in ministry to others who have made a mess of their lives – who are you more like, the Lord, or the person you're trying to help?]

- do you remember this story in the gospels?... **Luke 18:9-17 - And He also told this parable to some people who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt: “Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. “The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself: ‘God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. ‘I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.’ “But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, the sinner!’ “I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted.” And they were bringing even their babies to Him so that He would touch them, but when the disciples saw it, they *began* rebuking them. But Jesus called for them, saying, “Permit the children to come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. “Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it *at all.*”**

- one sign of mature prayer is when it is less about your plans, and desires, or others failures, or even power over you...and more about the recognition of your need for mercy...

## **II. Review God's Mighty Acts.**

### **A. Habakkuk's example.**

- please keep in mind that this was a song...
- Habakkuk wrote this, perhaps to sing to himself...
- and for the people of Judah to sing to one another as they were besieged by Babylon...
- and then carried away...
- to teach to their children and grandchildren during the 70 year Babylonian captivity...
  - you wonder if Daniel was taught this song...Ezra...Nehemiah...Queen Esther...

- and we can't be dogmatic about the meaning of each of these phrases, but it's not hard to be reasonably sure about many of them...

#### **1. v. 3 - God calling the nation Israel and revealing His splendor to them.**

**Habakkuk 3:3 - God comes from Teman, And the Holy One from Mount Paran. Selah. His splendor covers the heavens, And the earth is full of His praise.**

**2. v. 4 – God leading His people through His Shekina glory.**

**Habakkuk 3:4 - His radiance is like the sunlight; He has rays *flashing* from His hand...**

**3. v. 5 – God shows His power through the ten plagues on Egypt**

**Habakkuk 3:5 - Before Him goes pestilence, And plague comes after Him.**

**4. v. 6-7 – God leading His people to the promised land.**

**Habakkuk 3:6-7 - He stood and surveyed the earth; He looked and startled the nations. Yes, the perpetual mountains were shattered, The ancient hills collapsed. His ways are everlasting...**

**5. v. 8 – 10 – God parting the Red Sea and the Jordan River?**

**Habakkuk 3:8-10 - Did the LORD rage against the rivers...Or was Your wrath against the sea...**

- we can't be sure about this one because it would be out of sequence historically, but the imagery is very similar to what is used to describe these great events in other places in God's Word...

**6. v. 11 – God caused the sun and moon to stand still (Joshua 10)?**

**Habakkuk 3:11 - Sun *and* moon stood in their places; they went away at the light of Your arrows, at the radiance of Your gleaming spear.**

- again, we have to be careful not to be dogmatic about this, but the events recorded in Joshua 10 were a great day in the history of Israel...

- there is more to this song but that's enough to give us the point...

- and as we said, we can't be absolutely sure about every OT event Habakkuk was referring to...but the point is clear...

- if the children of Israel would take their focus off the wickedness of the Babylonians...or even the power of the Babylonians, and instead place in on the power of their mighty God in the past – that could steel their hearts for whatever challenge they might have to face that day...

- and you can imagine Daniel singing this song in the lion's den...

- or Nehemiah when he mounted his horse early that morning to survey the broken down wall...

- or Queen Esther when she had to decide if she would stand up to Mordecai

- or Ezra when he was leading the people back to rebuild the temple...

- there is power and confidence available to those who choose to focus on God's mighty acts...

- now, what about the...

### **B. Contemporary applications to us.**

- what about when you're facing adversity?...

- when someone is sinning against you, or disappointing you, or threatening you?...

- can you (will you) follow the process we're seeing in this text?

- I'm not going to worry about when they're going to get theirs...

- or how I'm so much better than the person afflicting me...

- I'm going to stand in awe of God...and I'm going to pray that His work will be done...

- first and foremost in me...and I'm going to believe that God can give me all the power I need to stand up against adversity because I'm going to remind myself of all the powerful ways He's done that in the past...

- now, what about the person who would say – but I've never seen any of those...
- that is one of the beauties of the Bible – you have a ready-made background of ways God has shown His power...and as you become more familiar with Scripture, it prepares you to face adversity well because God helped others before you to do just that...

**- Romans 15:4 - For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.**

- then I would encourage you to look for as many contemporary examples of God's power as you possibly can...
- suppose you're having trouble with a neighbor or a co-worker who's been giving you a hard time – and you have been crying out in “Hab. 1” kind of prayers – how long, why me?...what about their sin...look how they are hurting me...maybe it's time to get into chapter 3...
  - Lord – my focus isn't going to be on my plans or their shortcomings...
  - I am going to stand in awe of you...
  - and I am going to ask you to revive your work in me, and in that person who is giving me a hard time...
  - and I am going to review all the ways you have powerfully worked in others...
  - and I'm going to pick up one of those invitations to that new series and put it in the hand of that person, because I believe you are powerful enough to use your Word in the lives of others...I've seen you do it before and I believe you can do it now...

- but...what if it gets worse...suppose this happens, or that...
- Habakkuk answers that question...

### **III. Let the Sufficiency of Your Joy in Christ Prepare You for Future Challenges.**

#### **A. Imminent problems.**

**Habakkuk 3:16 - ...I must wait quietly for the day of distress, For the people to arise *who* will invade us.**

#### **B. The possibility that the future may be lean.**

- suppose the fig trees don't blossom...and there's no fruit on the vine...
- suppose the yield of the olive fails...and the fields produce no food...
- suppose the flock is cut off...and there are no cattle in the stalls...

#### **C. God's sufficient joy can still sustain me.**

**Habakkuk 3:18-19 - Yet I will exult in the LORD, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation. The Lord GOD is my strength, And He has made my feet like hinds' feet, And makes me walk on my high places. For the choir director, on my stringed instruments.**