

Persevering Through Crisis

Habakkuk 2:1-4

One of those memories that resurfaces is when dad took my brother and me to the county fairgrounds to see my first “demolition derby.” I remember the excitement and shock as I watched car after car run into each other leaving crumpled metal and steam blowing out of broken radiators. It was just like I imagined Old Faithful—which I still haven’t seen.

The crowd seemed to feed off the violent impact and destruction as car after car was destroyed and left motionless on the track. Finally, there was only one hunk of smoking, demolished, yet somehow still moving clump of steel left and declared the winner.

As exciting and thrilling as the derby was for an eight year old, the intrigue and interest has since faded with time. Today, however, when I look back I cannot help but think about how that night at the fairgrounds represents a microcosm of life and a growing description of our banged and battered culture.

Friday morning we relived the devastation and carnage of 9-11. As one person said, “That one day has marked my life, perhaps forever. Every morning I wake up to turn on the news and see what else is going to happen.” This week our community has experienced another blow in the tragic accident that destroyed one family, and yet another one that took the life of an eight year old. Another shares, “Never in our 30 years of marriage have I felt so overwhelmed by the crisis we are facing as a family.” Just three days ago, in conversation with two seasoned and normally upbeat attorneys, each volunteered that they had never in all their years of practice been confronted with so many crises.

If we were to share on a more personal level, most of us would agree that the apparent crescendo of circumstances and events that begin to eat away at our emotions and sense of well-being leaves us feeling overwhelmed.

This comes as no surprise to the God who has provided the only alternative to being left helpless or hopeless. Jesus Himself said, “In the world you *will have* tribulation but take courage, I have overcome the world.”

So what can we do in the face of crisis and those times when we find ourselves in the midst of what the Apostle Paul encountered and defined as “tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or nakedness, or peril, or sword”? We can identify with Habakkuk in the conflict he experienced and how he responded to it. Many have said that Habakkuk could well be the most relevant and contemporary book of the Bible for each of us.

Life Response

1. This week MEMORIZE and MEDITATE on Psalm 73:25-26 “*Whom have I in heaven but You? And besides You, I desire nothing on earth. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.*”
 - (a) Read this passage in the context of all of Psalm 73. In what ways can you identify with the writer?
 - (b) Note Psalm 73:15-17; 25-26 and Habakkuk 2:1-2. What parallels do you see? What principle or principles can you identify that would apply to your life right now?
2. What can you learn from Habakkuk’s choice to exercise his will in verse one? Think about his position of being alone between his people and their circumstances on one side and God on the other. In what way(s) can you relate to his personal choice?
3. How does the concept of an “Eternal Perspective” determine how you face your present circumstances?

Read Luke 6:20-26, then 27-38. What parallels do you see? What if you see no present results to your circumstances? What does it truly mean to have an “Eternal Perspective”?

4. Compare Habakkuk 2:1-4 and 3:17-19. How do these passages reflect a cause/effect response when facing tribulation or crisis that would otherwise overwhelm?

“One way of looking at it might be that for 42 years, I’ve been making small, regular deposits in this bank of experience, education and training and on January 15th the balance was sufficient so that I could make a very large withdraw..” - Capt. Chesley Sullenberger

What happens when our world begins to fall apart?

Background:

- Filled with “Why?”
- Interactive communion with God (Prayer)
- Judah had grown cold, indifferent, passive
- Contrast between godless political leadership and Godly leadership
- Written in a seedbed of strife and conflict

3 Chapters answers 3 Questions

- Ch. 1 Does God know or even care about what is going on in my conflicted world?
Ch. 2 What is my basis for confidence/security/ stability as I face my conflicted world?
Ch. 3 How do I position myself to rejoice or exult in the midst of my conflicted world?

Ch. 1 Does God know or even care about what is going on in my conflicted world?

- 1:1-4 Strife’s reality - It’s OK to ask why.
1:5 Sovereign rule - God knows quite well.
omniscient, omnipotent, just, loving
1:12-17 Steadfast reference - God is eternal and unchangeable.

Ch. 2 What is my basis for confidence/security/stability as I face my conflicted world?

- Issue of motivation
- God’s answer is not to remove the circumstances but to trust Him to strengthen us to persevere through crisis

A. The Will 2:1-4

A predetermined choice to trust

- The choice TO STAND on the grace & character of God
- The choice TO WATCH with a heart for God
- The choice TO ACT on the Word of God

PRAYER

Father, Thank You for Your trustworthiness. I confess my continual focus on my circumstances rather than Your desire to be sovereignly involved in every area of my life.

BY faith I will take my stand on the foundation of Your character and Your word.

BY faith I will watch in anticipation as You fulfill Your purpose as I trust You through my circumstances.

BY faith I will act on the authority of Your word in such a way as to allow others to see Your grace and glory.

BY faith I will choose to see my circumstances with an Eternal Perspective embedded in my relationship with You.

Thank You for Your unchanging grace that holds me in You. I pray that my faith in You will produce Your faithfulness in my walk.

I pray this in the name of Your only son, Jesus Christ, my only hope.

Amen