

Devotion 38:

Our Father Moves In Mysterious Ways On His Timetable

Habakkuk 1—3

I believe the two attributes of our Father in this book are two of the most annoying for human children with their earthly parents. After teaching teenagers for almost 30 years, I believe their top two comments about their parents can be boiled down to these: 1) “I don’t understand them!” and 2) “I hate it when they say ‘wait.’” And, come to think of it, I think these two qualities frustrate us the most about our heavenly Father too.

In one of the more unique books in the Bible, Habakkuk is a recorded conversation between the prophet and God. Habakkuk has two main complaints that he brings before our Father. Here is the first:

“How long, O Lord, must I call for help, but you do not listen? Or cry out to you, ‘Violence!’ but you do not save? Why do you make me look at injustice? Why do you tolerate wrong? Destruction and violence are before me; there is strife, and conflict abounds.” 1:2-3

In other words, “God, why aren’t you doing something about the mess that is all around us?” To Habakkuk, our Father wasn’t acting quickly enough. To this first question, our Father responds with this:

“Look at the nations and watch—and be utterly amazed. For I am going to do something in your days that you would not believe, even if you were told. I am raising up the Babylonians, that ruthless and impetuous people, who sweep across the whole earth to seize dwelling places not their own.” 1:5-6

Let’s make a few observations here. Habakkuk thought that our Father wasn’t doing anything. Judah was corrupt and vile and ungodly. Habakkuk kept calling for help but didn’t see any. Yet, our Father answered in verse 6, “*I am raising up the Babylonians.*” Notice the tense of the verb. It is present perfect; it is not future. Our Father was indeed doing something right then as Habakkuk was praying for action, but Habakkuk couldn’t see the action! There’s observation number one.

The second observation is this: even when our Father tells us His plan, we don’t always believe it. He predicts that Habakkuk will have trouble grasping His answer and He was right! It is the second dilemma Habakkuk voices to God and we can even envision his scratching his head as he is asking the question:

“Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrong. Why then do you tolerate the treacherous? Why are you silent while the wicked swallow up those more righteous than themselves?” 1:13

In other words, “God, I don’t understand why You would use the evil and wicked to punish the righteous.” Here is what our Father said in response:

“Though it linger, wait for it; it will certainly come and will not delay. See, he (king of Babylon) is puffed up; his desires are not upright—but the righteous will live by his faith...Woe to him who builds a city with bloodshed and establishes a town by crime! Has not the Lord Almighty determined that the people’s labor is only fuel for the fire, that the nations exhaust themselves for nothing?” 2:3b-4, 12-13

Let’s make some more observations. First, from our perspective, our Father’s response might “linger” but from His perspective, “it will not delay.” In other words, His timing is just right. Secondly, the wicked will eventually be punished. Lastly, “the righteous will live by his faith.”

Habakkuk is a book for our times as well. We children can become impatient when it appears that evil and wicked are winning all around us. We can become pessimistic and doubt when the world seems to be spiraling more and more out of control. We want so badly for Christ to return and carry us all home. Sometimes it seems as though our Father has forgotten us. II Peter 3:8-14 echoes the sentiment of Habakkuk:

“But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless, and at peace with him.”

As we wait, let’s remember that His timing is impeccable and everything is on schedule. And when we don’t understand what He is doing or why, let’s live by faith and trust in Him.