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Be Careful What You Pray For

 Have you ever thought about what it would be like to initiate a conversation with God and God decides to engage in said conversation in return, but not immediately. This is exactly what is occurring between God and Habakkuk and it is frustrating to Habakkuk. What makes this prophecy unique is that Habakkuk is not preaching to the people the message of God but rather the dialogue between Habakkuk and God is what is recorded in the book of Habakkuk. Habakkuk is struggling with the fact that King Josiah had undertaken many moral reforms such as purging the nation of altars to false gods (1 Chronicles 34:1-7). The Passover celebration was restored when the book of the Law was found (2 Kings 22:8-20; 23:21-27). However when Josiah dies in battle against Neco the king of Egypt, all the reforms are erased and all subsequent kings return to evil in the sight of the Lord. With evil on the rise due to Josiah’s death Habakkuk receives his prophecy and engages in dialogue with the Lord.

**Thesis: Psalm 37:7**

  **7 Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him;**

**fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way,**

**over the man who carries out evil devices!**

 **I. Dealing with Time:**

 Like so many of us in life, we want answers as quickly and as accurately as we can get them. In this instance, Habakkuk is just like a lot of us living today. We do not have the patience we need in order to get complete and thorough answers, instead we sometimes are satisfied with only part of the information or we gripe and complain because the answer is not coming quick enough. Habakkuk wants an instant answer from God for taking care of the problem. We see this in Habakkuk 1:2-4.

 **2 O Lord, how long shall I cry for help,**

 **and you will not hear?**

 **Or (how long) cry to you “Violence!”**

 **and you will not save?**

In verse 2 we have the “how long” questions which cry for help and a cry to stop the violence Habakkuk is addressing God with, and then…

 **3 Why do you make me see iniquity,**

 **and why do you idly look at wrong?**

 **Destruction and violence are before me;**

 **strife and contention arise.**

In verse 3, we have the “why” questions which are iniquity and accuses God for idly standing by and doing nothing how can he or we do this, we can’t, Habakkuk is addressing God with, and then…

 **4 So the law is paralyzed,**

 **and justice never goes forth.**

 **For the wicked surround the righteous;**

 **so justice goes forth perverted.**

It almost seems like the more Habakkuk questions God the quicker He thinks he’ll get an answer. Yet in verse 4, he reveals a defeatist attitude, “the law is paralyzed,” and “justice never goes forth.” And finally “the wicked surround the righteous; so justice goes forth perverted.

**II. Habakkuk also wonders why God isn’t answering prayer:**

He’s not the only one who has ever struggled with this…

 **When he opened the fith seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne. They cried out with a loud voice, “O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?”**

 **(Revelation 6:9-10 ESV)**

 **How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I take counsel in my soul and have sorrow in my heart all the day? How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?**

 **(Psalm 13:1-2 ESV)**

 **Then the Angel of the LORD said, “O LORD of hosts, how long will you have know mercy on Jerusalem and the cities of Judah against which you have been angry these seventy years?”**

 **(Zechariah 1:12 ESV)**

Have you ever had some of those very same questions? I think we all have asked the “how long” and the “why” during our journey as a Christian. I think this happens a lot when something happens to one of our loved ones that we don’t see any explanation or reasoning to help us understand why?

 **Behold, I cry out, ‘Violence!’ But I am not answered; I call for help, but there is no justice. (Job 19:7 ESV)**

True faith takes a massive amount of trust in God, trust that my not be replicated in the physical world but only in a belief in an all powerful and unconditional loving Being. Just because we become Christians doesn’t mean God shows us all the answers it is a life that is guided by faith and shows us we have to trust God if we say that we love Him in order to walk the walk of a faithful follower.

To Habakkuk it feels like God is ignoring him.

**III. This Shows Us To Be Careful What We Pray For:**

Being careful what we pray for starts by being honest with God. Habakkuk shows us that we can have a conversation with God even though it might mean we are filled with emotions and our message a little raw, as long as we’re honest with God, He can handle it. It is when we our not honest with Him or ourselves that God becomes saddened and hurt because we have chose to deceive Him in our message and life actions.

Habakkuk showed us even though distressed and concerned about God’s people, He did not choose to turn his back on or walk away from God. This is what separates those who have true faith and those who are struggling with their faith. Don’t turn and run at the first sign of trouble when you don’t know what God’s plan is for you.

 **LORD, do not rebuke me in your anger or discipline me in your wrath. 2 Your arrows have pierced me, and your hand has come down on me. 3 Because of your wrath there is no heath in my body; there is no soundness in my bones because of my sin. 4 My guilt has overwhelmed me like a burden too heavy to bear. 5 My wounds fester and are loathsome because of my sinful folly. 6 I am bowed down and brought very low; all day long I go about mourning. 7 My back is filled with searing pain; there is no health in my body. 8 I am feeble and utterly crushed; I groan in anguish of heart. 9 All my longings lie open before you, Lord; my sighing is not hidden from you. (Psalm 38:1-9 NIV 2011)**

Remember Habakkuk does not use the mantra everything happens for a reason but that from his point of view, there is no reason, for all of these things to be happening.

Conclusion:

We have to trust and put our faith in God. He loved us first and still loves us now so much that he sent His only begotten Son to save us from our sins. Have faith in God even when we don’t get answers. God is in Control!