

WHAT TO DO WHEN I'M STRUGGLING WITH GOD'S WILL

Habakkuk 1: 12- 2: 1; text Habakkuk 2:1

Maranatha Fellowship Church

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I. Submitting to God's Will

A. People of other religions often serve gods that are based on their own wills. (see Romans 1:18- 27)

B. Sometimes even as Christians, we think we can bend God to our wills.

1. But we forget that in the Lord's Prayer, before Jesus taught to ask for anything, he taught us to say, "Your kingdom come. Your will be done."
2. To ask for anything in Jesus' name, is to ask in the name of the one who said with sweat pouring down like drops of blood, "Not my will, but yours be done."

C. There are many times, however, when God's will is difficult to accept.

2 Corinthians 12:7-9a (NIV) To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."

D. That is Habakkuk's problem in this scripture.

1. He asked God to take care of the injustices and violence that were becoming commonplace in Judah.
2. God responded by saying he would send the Babylonians to pillage and destroy the cities of Judah, and take their people prisoner.
3. But that didn't make sense to Habakkuk, who saw this as an even worse problem.

Habakkuk 1:13 (NIV) 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?

E. With such questions in his mind, Habakkuk found his peace in the truths expressed in our text.

Habakkuk 2:1 (NIV) I will stand at my watch and station myself on the ramparts; I will look to see what he will say to me, and what answer I am to give to this complaint.

1. Certainly, the purpose of this verse was not to give us a formula as to exactly how we should respond when we are struggling with God's will.
2. This verse, however, does give us an example as to how a godly person would know peace in such a situation.

"The Prophet does not speak according to his private feeling, but that he represents the feelings of all the godly. John Calvin: [Commentary on the Minor Prophets](#)

Questions:

- 1) How do the gods of other religions often reflect the desires of the people who believe in them? How are the ceremonies of these religions attempts to manipulate these gods to do what the worshipper wants him or her to do? How are the Christian faith and the God of the Bible different?
- 2) Have I ever thought I could manipulate God to do what I wanted? How did I try to do that? Why was I tempted to do that?
- 3) When have I last struggled with God's will? What happened?
- 4) Why is it dangerous to use every example from the lives of prophets and other Biblical characters as instructive for us as Christians today? Why is this text of what Habakkuk did instructive for us? How do we distinguish what is instructive from what is not?

II. Finding Peace in the Watchtower

Habakkuk 2:1a (NIV) I will stand at my watch.

A. In those days, soldiers would be stationed on watchtowers, to look for messengers who came to bring further news on how the battle was going.

B. Similarly, the prophet Habakkuk was waiting for a further message from the Lord.

1. When we receive terrible news, we might think that this is the end of the story, but it's not.
2. If we really believe that God is in control and that he working everything for our salvation (see Romans 8:28), then we have to know the Lord is not through yet, but has more to reveal.
3. And the prophet Habakkuk was waiting to hear that further message.

C. Those who give up on the Lord are left with only despair, but those who wait on the Lord have hope.

Isaiah 40:27, 31 (NIV) Why do you say, O Jacob, and complain, O Israel, "My way is hidden from the LORD; my cause is disregarded by my God"? Those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

D. The prophet found his peace by waiting for God's unpredictable answer.

Habakkuk 2:1c (NIV) I will look to see what he will say to me, and what answer I am to give to this complaint.

1. He didn't know what God would answer, but he trusted that God had an answer.

2. In those days, towers were used to look out for enemies who were approaching to make a surprise attack on the city that no one was expecting.
3. Similarly, the prophet was waiting for answer from God that he didn't expect.

Questions:

- 1) When something goes wrong, or keeps getting worse, why do I believe that it's the end or that nothing will get better?
- 2) Why do we as Christians believe that God has a further answer and that things will get better? Even as those who know that, what situations might still cause us to despair?
- 3) How does it bring me peace when I trust God for answers I could not have expected?

III. Finding Peace Behind the Rampart

Habakkuk 2:1 (NIV) and station myself on the ramparts;

A. The Lord was Habakkuk's rampart.

1. Ramparts were the huge walls that surrounded the cities in that time, protecting them from enemy attack.
2. Habakkuk trusted that not only were all events in God's hands, but he and the people of Judah were in God's hands.
 - a. It didn't matter if the walls of Jerusalem were torn down and its people dragged into captivity.
 - b. They were God's people and they were in his hands.

B. It was from that place of comfort and strength that Habakkuk was asking the Lord the questions he was asking.

1. He wasn't afraid God had abandoned them.
2. He wasn't trying to manipulate God.
3. In faith, he was saying to the God who protected him and the people of Judah, "I don't understand."
4. As he questioned God, he still had the peace of knowing he was in God's hands.

C. When things go wrong in our lives, and we pray to God, we must pray from a place of comfort and peace and not pray in fear.

1. That's sometimes why it is helpful to use Psalms to guide our prayers.
2. The Psalmists often express frustration with what God is allowing, but in almost every Psalm they also express their trust in God their rock, rampart, and fortress.

Psalm 42:9 (NIV) I say to God my Rock, "Why have you forgotten me? Why must I go about mourning, oppressed by the enemy?"

D. We can also know that even if our faith fails, our rock will still protect us.

John 10:28-29 (NIV) I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand.

E. As Christians we find our peace not only in the God who protects us from our enemies, but also in the knowledge that God in Christ has already defeated them.

1. He defeated Satan by his death on the cross, and he defeated death by his resurrection from the grave.
2. He is now ruling in heaven arranging all the events of this world to bring about that day when he will return as the victorious judge and king.

Romans 8:37 (NIV) No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

3. We do not know why God allows certain things to happen or why he commands that they happen.
4. But, as we struggle to understand God's will, we stand on the watch tower waiting for Jesus our king to return
5. And we as we do, we rest in him our Almighty fortress and in the victory he has already won.

Questions:

- 1) How does it comfort me to know that the Lord is my rampart, no matter what his will is for me?
- 2) How does believing that God is my rampart (or rock or fortress) help me to honestly express my frustrations without falling from the faith that sustains me? How might the Psalms be helpful in formulating prayers that express both my honesty with God and my trust in him? What Psalms are particularly helpful?
- 3) As I faced the storms of God's will for my life, when has my faith failed or faltered? Why was this not the end of my faith?
- 4) Why are we Christians today better able to wait for the Lord's answers and trust that he is our fortress than were God's people in Old Testament times?