

WAITING UPON GOD

"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."

Habakkuk 2:1

Faced with perplexity what is Habakkuk to do? He does the one thing that is right and proper for the true believer in Jesus to do. He has prayed bringing before God all his perplexities concerning the revelation of God as to what he is going to do, this revelation that he, God, was going to use the Babylonian nation to judge and punish the people of Israel for their sin. In this first verse of chapter 2 of Habakkuk we see that the prophet did three things: He watched. He looked to see. He looked for God's answer. Let us look at these three points in our text because they give grand direction to all true believers as to how they respond to God after prayer.

We have in this one verse direction concerning one of the most difficult and important aspects of the Christian life. Like Habakkuk every Christian faces problems in their life. Habakkuk's problem was the revelation of how God was going to deal with Israel. The problems each Christian faces will be different, but whatever the problem the Christian will always bring the matter to God in prayer. This does not mean that the use of means to solve the problems are rejected. All right and useful means are gifts from God, and are meant to be used. One example is the problem of sickness. In our day we are privileged to be able to use great advances in medical knowledge and means of healing, but with all this in mind the Christian always brings the problem to the Lord in prayer, because we are taught in the word of God that this is our privilege in Christ, and that God's omnipotent power is over all his people, and is exercised for our good. There is no difficulty about bringing the matter to God in prayer, and laying the whole matter before the Lord and seeking his gracious blessing and

help. This is what Habakkuk had done. The problem is in the time after we have made our prayer.

We have brought our problem to the Lord, but what is our common action after this. For most of us our action is to return to thinking about our problem, and worrying over it, and still being anxious about it. It is not long before we pray the same prayer again as if we think God has not heard us the first time, and that we need to knock on the door of heaven even louder. Our problem is that we are still anxious over our problem. This is so very common, and I personally can empathize with what I am describing here. Habakkuk's example shows us the way forward.

Watching God

What is the example of Habakkuk? After prayer, he describes his action in terms of someone who goes up onto the battlements of the castle, away from everyone else, and looks out on the distant scene to see if the enemy is coming. The picture is of turning away from the problem we have prayed about and looking in the opposite direction, and in the case of the Christian the direction is away from the problem to God. It is the direction of shutting out the temporal scene and concentrating on God.

What does this mean in practice? This is a big subject, but let me try and open it up a little. Looking away from ourselves and our problems means to look at God as he has revealed himself in the Bible. We read the Bible and God reveals himself to us in his word. It is the Holy Spirit's work to make the Bible yield to the faithful soul the riches of the revelation which God has given of himself. In this way we concentrate on God and all that we have been taught. We are reminded of the way he looked after his people of old, and the marvelous ways he delivered them out of their troubles. We read of the testimony of the saints as they praised God for his deliverances out of all their troubles. This leads us to see the faithfulness of God in all his dealings with his redeemed people, and how his love, mercy and grace have never, and will never, fail. Then we are brought face to face with the

promises of God in his word, and by the grace of the Holy Spirit, the seeking soul is led to a certain scripture or promise that seems to light up, and there is given the believer the sense that this is God speaking directly to him or her, and is led thereby to lay hold of the word and promise, so that it seems to enfold the believer like a shield and armor

Then in our continued praying this concentration on God means that we rest in confidence on God's unfailing love, and in faith rest upon his word that he has our problem in his all-sufficient hand, and that in his good time we shall see the return of our prayers coming from the all-wise and loving hand of God. This is what Paul is seeking to make known to us in that wonderful passage in Philippians 4: 4-7. Here Paul tells us that we have no need to be anxious about anything, and that all we have to do is bring our anxiety to the Lord in prayer, and leave it with him, and as we do this, God's peace will fill our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Savior. Paul is saying what Habakkuk is practicing. We bring the matter to the Lord, and in faith leave it with him, believing and knowing by faith that we need not be anxious about it again, for our loving God will be working all things for our good, and all will be done for us which is best. This 'watching' then is not just a one off business, but a continual dwelling upon God so that the knowledge of God which we know and learn will be strengthening our faith more and more each day, so that we know the future is safe in the hands of Jesus.

Look to See what God will Say

This brings us to the second direction which Habakkuk's action gives us. Habakkuk tells us that he will look to see what God will say to him. Here is such an important aspect of victorious Christian living and experience. This is the action of faith. It is the belief that the future for each believer is mapped out by God and he is working all things for our good. It is a leaving of our problem with the Lord with the confidence that every tomorrow is in his hands, and we look for the Lord to reveal his blessed actions for us in his good time.

The direction of Habakkuk is one of looking out into the future day by day confident that sooner or later we shall see the good hand of the Lord bringing blessing and the answer to our prayer. It is waking up each morning with the peace of God as we live in the light of this truth that soon the blessing we are waiting for will be revealed. It is a wonderful joy in the Lord. We rejoice because he has all our problems and needs in his hand, and we have only to look eagerly forward to the realizing of such blessing.

There is something very exciting and stimulating about this 'looking'. The excitement is in the fact that the future will be always bringing forth new and great blessings from the Lord. We do not know what the future will bring, but we know the future is in the hands of our God, who is our God and Father through faith in Jesus Christ. We know that whatever that future may be, whether it brings difficulties or joys, yet all will be brought to us by our loving and gracious heavenly Father, and will be for our ultimate good. The point that Habakkuk is making before us is that 'looking' away from ourselves to God with expectation as to what God is going to do, will be both wonderful and the best that it possibly can be. And where God brings tests in our way, his grace is sufficient for us, and we will experience that his strength is made perfect before us and in our experience in our weakness.

Looking for God's Answer

The last direction which Habakkuk gives us is in the words "and what answer I am to give to this complaint?" Habakkuk's complaint was his problem concerning what God had told him, that God was going to use the sinful and arrogant Babylonian nation to punish Israel for their sin, and the problem that God was going to use a nation more sinful than Israel to punish Israel. As a prophet in Israel he had to tell the people the mind of God, and so he speaks of God telling him what he is to say to the people of Israel. In all this Habakkuk was waiting for an answer to his prayer, and the answer was as much for his benefit as it was for the nation.

The direction here is that having brought our needs and problems to the Lord in prayer, we must and should always look for the answer, believing that God will answer our prayer. Here is a very great aspect of prayer. How often we pray, bringing our need to God, and either do not look for an answer, but at heart do not even expect an answer; or if we look for an answer still doubt that the answer is forthcoming. It is so easy to pray and then allow the many pressures and experiences of life to cause us to forget our prayer. How dishonoring to God to behave in such a way. We do not mean it to be so, but it is by nature an insult to God.

Then it may be that having prayed the way we behave after our prayer shows a doubting of God and an imperfection of faith. We have no problem in believing in the power of God to do anything, and that no problem is beyond his power to solve. The problem is in believing he will do it in our case. Perhaps we have prayed for a long time, and it seems that God has not answered our prayer, and so we doubt, at the back of our mind, whether God will answer our prayer, or whether we are not worthy to receive the blessing of an answer. On the surface of our life we would deny such doubts and fears, but they niggle at the back of our minds, and bring complaints to rise in our minds against God. This is the food which Satan uses to weaken and even destroy faith.

Where do we go wrong? We go wrong because we are not looking for the answer to our prayer, and expecting and believing that God will answer. Because of this we may well miss the answer when it comes. Then we have our perception as to what the answer will be, or of the answer we expect and want. Then when God does not meet our expectation we think he has not answered our prayer. The need here is to have an open and trusting mind to receive whatever the answer may be that God will give. Then there is the problem that our timing is different to God's timing. To God a thousand years is but a day. To us a day is like a thousand years. We fail in faith because God does not respond to our prayer in the quick way we wish. The truth is God's time is always the best and right time. We need to remember that the

fullness of time for Christ to come into the world as Savior was thousands of years after the initial promise given to Adam. But God kept his word.

Conclusion

I have given such a poor and inadequate exposition of this important Scripture, but it all boils down to one thing, that having brought our problem to the Lord, we must look away from the problem and in faith concentrate our faith and thoughts upon God, and look in faith for his answer in his good time. Then we can rejoice in the Lord.

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http://www.wordoflife.uk.com/habakkuk/habakkuk2/habakkuk2_1-waiting_upon_god.htm