

Crossroads Baptist Church
July 15, 2007 10:00
Habakkuk 1:1
Habakkuk Series #1

“Habakkuk: Who Are You?”

I am beginning a new series of messages with the same theme that we have been exploring through the book of Romans – faith.

But for the next few Sundays we will go to the source of theme of Romans and that is the book of Habakkuk.

You ask, Who is Habakkuk? And Why do we concern ourselves with him today? You don't know anybody named Habakkuk. No one will ever name their child Habakkuk. And further more, that part of the Bible is so old, what good does it do us today?

Let me address that first. In our contemporary churches, it is very popular to ask what a book of the Bible or even the Bible itself has to do with our lives. I am not against that question for all questions are legitimate as long as you are open to an answer. So I welcome that question and consider it healthy.

The problem arises when we seek only to find how something applies to us and that's all we want. Give me five helps for raising children, give me the key to a successful marriage, help me balance my check book. Now there is nothing wrong with those issues, but we must be very careful to make a “god” out of the solution and want only an answer.

I saw an article the other day in the paper that said my generation is sicker, having more doctor visits earlier in their lives and already having difficulty in their 50s to reaching down to pick up their grandchildren. The reason – we have been raised with doctors and medicine and if we have a medical issue, we go to the doctor and get a pill. We don't want to talk about changing our diet, exercising or changing our lifestyle.

This carries over spiritually. Preacher, give me a pill to help me and if I'm not better by next Sunday, I'll come back and get another pill. But if I don't like the pill you are prescribing or if it is not working, then I will go to another doctor (church) and see what they have to offer. Because the only thing that matters is that I get my problems fixed and get them fixed the less painful way possible. Whoever has the answer get my attendance.

This is not following Christ. This approach is self-centered and works oriented. We want something that works and we don't care who said it, where it came from or what the long term affects might be, we just want it to work.

We think we can't find the favor of God by following some advice. God's Word is not advice on the same level of Oprah or Larry King. It is the eternal, never-changing command of God that is good for every generation no matter if they live with a walking cane or a pierced tongue.

Church, I can't go there. I can not just use your money that you invest in my life to come up here Sunday-after-Sunday to give you “the three latest steps to get over the discomfort of your ingrown toe nail.” It will be doing you great harm if that is all the pulpit at CrossRoads is. Why is this disservice to you?

- This type of preaching is how cults starts. Just enough “Bible” sprinkled in to make it look good.
- This is how you get off in wrong doctrine. What we believe controls ultimately how we behave. Don't chase the symptoms of wrong behavior, change the source of it – the mind – what you believe.
- This is how you your life will fall apart. When things in your life do begin to fall apart and there is no “rock” for you, then what does it matter how practical the little sermon was or how beautiful the house was when it all comes crashing down.

You need to know what you believe and why you believe it. And the answer to the “why” is not “because that's what the preacher said.” I'm not trying to make the pulpit to be a seminary class, but the pastor is a teacher who should be a “theologian-in-residence” who teaches the people of God week after week the things for which to build their lives.

So, why study Habakkuk?

1. It's a dialogue between Habakkuk and God with Habakkuk complaining to God about what He is doing. Ever been there?
2. It is the foundation for understanding faith as revealed in the New Testament. Since faith is the most important, most essential topic – then we need to understand it well.
3. This book along with Romans was used as a lightening rod to start the Protestant Reformation so we need to understand our history.

Habakkuk name means “the embracer.” In the midst of a heavy burden he discovers victory through embracing the promises of God. But some suggest that his name means “to wrestle.” In his book, he does both.

What was his “burden?” That means a “heavy load.”

We know the history of the nation of Israel that after King Solomon the kingdom divided in 930 B.C. to Israel in the north and Judah in the south. Israel came to judgment in 722 when they fell to the Assyrians and in 586 the Babylonians took the southern kingdom into captivity.

Habakkuk most likely wrote this book between 612 and 605 BC and he was a contemporary with Jeremiah, Nahum and Zephaniah. The people of God were very corrupt which caused Habakkuk great grief but what caused him greater sorrow was that God was not doing anything about it. So Habakkuk makes his complaint to the Lord and asks God why He's not doing something. God replies back that He is and that He plans to use the Babylonians to judge His people.

Now Habakkuk has a greater problem - what God is doing. He doesn't understand how God can do this. He was deeply confused, completely frustrated and thoroughly irritated with God.

Someone wrote over the book of Habakkuk "When God Doesn't Make Sense."

God's answer – Trust me. Have faith in Me.

God told Habakkuk what He was going to do, but He never explained to him why He was doing what He was doing.

The solution to Habakkuk's problem was not comprehension, but faith. No matter what the circumstances are, you trust Me. The main verse in Habakkuk is 2:4 "The just (righteous) shall live by his faith."

This is the basis of all we are. Let me show you this by referring to the three New Testament passages where Habakkuk 2:4 is quoted.

Romans 1: 16-17 "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."

Galatians 3:11 "But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for "The just shall live by faith."

Hebrews 10: 38-39 "Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him." But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul."

I. The gospel is personal.

In Habakkuk he says that a person lives "by his faith."
Romans 1: 16 "to everyone who believes."

Faith is not on a family plan, it is personal.

No one can have faith for you. It is personal.

II. The gospel is powerful

Romans says that this "is the power of God unto salvation."

The power to change you is not hidden deep within you and we only need to discover it and draw it out. No! you need the power from above to infiltrate your soul and dynamite all the wickedness and self will out of you.

How? By admitting you can't save yourself. You can't make yourself better. But Jesus can save you and Jesus alone. Then you trust only Him and you find the release of power that you need.

It was this truth that changed Martin Luther. Martin Luther was a German monk who was desperately seeking forgiveness of his sins. He fasted, prayed, did penance, and practiced the sacraments. He would climb up a long set of steps over and over again on his hands and knees, seeking to find approval from God and to have his sin forgiven. He attended confession over and over again, but would find that by the time he made it back to his chamber he remembered sin that was he had not confessed and would then have to hurry back. He was a very intelligent man who held six degrees.

In the midst of this, Luther was sent to the University of Wittenberg in Germany. When he got there, he was set to teach on the book of Romans and it was these words from Habakkuk that would change his life and ours forever. Upon understanding these words he said: "In that instance it seemed to me that I was born anew and I entered the gates of paradise."

Shortly thereafter, Martin Luther nailed his 95 Theses to the door of the Castle in Wittenberg and the Protestant Reformation began.

It can change your life as well.

III. The gospel's performance

Paul said in Galatians that we are not justified by beginning with faith and reverting back to keeping of the law, but that "the just LIVES by faith."

A group of heretics had come to that church saying that salvation begins with faith, but after that you must keep the Old Testament Law in order to remain saved. Paul

says that everyone who tries to keep the law is under a curse, but the people of faith are blessed. So you must decide which way. You can't have blessings and cursing together.

For Paul, he says that no one is declared righteous by the Law, but by faith.

I am no more trusting myself today after 38 years of being saved than I was the first day I believed.

Its still faith – trusting Christ.

IV. The gospel's perseverance

This faith lasts through all difficulties, diseases, disappointments, deaths, divorces, devastations.

Hebrews 10 is just before the great listing of faith heroes in chapter 11.

Faith that was faulty at the first fizzles at the finish.

Real faith is irrevocable, ongoing, enduring and lasts forever.

Philippians 1: 6 "being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ."

Hebrew word for "faith" can be translated "faithfulness" because the one who demonstrates faith does so by remaining faithful. You don't come into "faith" with other options thus there is no where else to turn to.

Some say that faith means no doubting. But I "doubt" that. But even though our doubts, we persevere. We hang in there.

The old song's chorus said,

Where could I go? O where could I go?
Seeking a refuge for my soul.
Needing a Friend to save me in the end,
Where could I go but to the Lord."