Sermon theme = Habakkuk’s first question voices the struggle of God allowing sin and wickedness to continue.

Introduction

Recent news
✓ Lonoke Co., Arkansas = Rape
✓ Mobile, Alabama = Selling drugs
✓ Elk River, Minnesota = Robbery
✓ Minneapolis, Minnesota = Murder
✓ Texas = Fake IDs to immigrants

Open Bibles (Habakkuk 1)

Exegesis

Background of Habakkuk

o Habakkuk 1:1
  1 The oracle that Habakkuk the prophet received.

  o “oracle” = Outline
    ✓ First Question (1:1-4)
    ✓ First Answer (1:5-11)
    ✓ Second Question (1:12-2:1)
    ✓ Second Answer (2:2-20)
    ✓ Hymn of Praise (3:1-19)

  o “oracle” = Theme
    ✓ God’s justice and holiness

  o “oracle” = Key Verse – Habakkuk 2:4
    4 See, he is puffed up; his desires are not upright-- but the righteous will live by his faith--
    ✓ Quoted in Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38

  o “Habakkuk the prophet” = Author
    ✓ Names held by many to mean “embrace” but exact meaning is unknown
    ✓ Traditions = Shunammite’s son; Feed Daniel in Lions’ Den
✓ Nothing known outside of the book
✓ First “prophet” designated in Minor Prophets

○ “received” = Date
✓ Option 1: End of Manasseh’s reign and early in Josiah’s reign (645-630 BC)
✓ Option 2: Early in Jehoiakim’s reign (608-605 BC)
✓ I prefer option 1 because of the “amazement” described in 1:5, the description of the Chaldeans in 1:6-11 is known by God and not necessarily Habakkuk, and the description of the conditions at the time (in 1:2-4)

❖ Habakkuk records his “conversation” with God – his questions and God’s answers, regarding the need for God’s justice and in praise of His holiness

➢ The Question of Sin and Wickedness
• Lament of God being unresponsive
  o Habakkuk 1:2
    2  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?

✓ “How long...” = Beginning of Hebrew idiom for a lament (cp. Psalm 13:1-2; 89:46; Jeremiah 12:4; Zechariah 1:12) ~ Similar to English “Once upon a time”
✓ “…O LORD...” = Personal name for God

★ Principle: When you have a lament (or complaint), it should go up (to someone who can deal with it) not down or out
✓ “…call for help...” = Implies the situation of a crisis – not a matter of inconvenience or difference in preference but real crisis
✓ “…you do not listen...” = This is not the word to hear (sound received) but to listen – an active response is expected; Example: parents and children (Yes sir)

★ Principle: It is not wrong to lament (pour out your feelings or frustrations) to God but it is wrong to blame or charge God with wrong
✓ “…cry out...” = Literally, “scream”; used often with a limited exclamation – like “Stop” or “Thief” or “Look out”
"...Violence..." = While we think of physical abuse, the regular Biblical usage of the word is more about a flagrant violation of moral law (cp. Genesis 6:11); Key word used 6 times in Habakkuk (1:2, 3, 9; 2:8, 17) and only used more often in Psalms (14) and Proverbs (8)

❖ Habakkuk laments to God that the moral violation (violence) around him does seem to be getting any of God’s attention or action – God is unresponsive

- Lament of wickedness being prevalent
  o Habakkuk 1:3
    3 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.

❖ "...injustice...wrong..." = Hebrew awen – trouble moving into wickedness, and amal – unpleasant aspects of toil or labor; Used in regards to social oppression and perverted justice (cp. Job 15:35; Psalm 7:14)

❖ "...Destruction...violence..." = Hebrew shod – spoiling, devastation, robbery, and hamas – violation of moral law (see 1:2); Used in regards to unjust oppression of the poor or weak by the rich or strong (cp. Jeremiah 6:7; 20:8; Ezekiel 45:9; Amos 3:10)

❖ "...strife...conflict..." = Hebrew rib – dispute, case, lawsuit, and madon – quarrel, dispute, nagging; Used of conflicts revolving around lawsuits (cp. Proverbs 15:18; 17:14; 26:20-21; Jeremiah 15:10)

❖ Habakkuk laments to God because the violence is not just self-directed by those involved in wickedness but is oppressive and abusive in wickedness to others

- Lament of justice being prevented and perverted
  o Habakkuk 1:4
    4 Therefore the law is paralyzed, and justice never prevails. The wicked hem in the righteous, so that justice is perverted.

❖ "...law..." = Law refers to the Mosaic Law – God’s revelation of His will for His people
★ Principle: God’s law (in existence and character) is not affected by sin but the application of His law may be affected

✓ “...justice...justice...” = All aspects of governmental functions – establishing law, interpreting law and enforcing law; in Habakkuk’s day the main concern is the enforcing of the law

✓ “...paralyzed...” = Hebrew pug – numb, cold, powerless, ineffective; The law exists but the law is not effectively being applied in Judah; Example: foot asleep

✓ “...never prevails...” = Literally, “goes out”; It’s as if cases are brought before the court, judge or king and nothing is done with them – no verdict is rendered

✓ “...perverted.” = Hebrew aqal – bend, twist, crooked, distorted; When there is an application of the law, it is twisted or distorted

❖ Habakkuk laments that justice, the application of God’s law, is either not being done or if it is being done it is done incorrectly

Conclusion

• Habakkuk laments because (working backwards)…
  ✓ …Justice is either prevented or perverted
  ✓ …Wickedness is prevalent
  ✓ …God is unresponsive

• Can you relate to Habakkuk?

• How do you feel when sin or wickedness seems to happen and even grow? {Anger, Frustration}

• What Habakkuk shows us, in his first question, is how we are to respond when we are faced with sin and wickedness unmet by justice – take your lament to God

Response

• As disciples of Jesus Christ, we are to respond to sin and wickedness around us with an appeal for God’s justice.