

When Habakkuk started his book, he was "down in the valley," wrestling with the will of God. Hab. 3:16 When I heard, my belly trembled; my lips quivered at the voice: rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble: when he cometh up unto the people, he will invade them with his troops.

Then he climbed higher and stood on the watchtower, waiting for God to reply.

After hearing God's Word and seeing God's glory, he became like a deer bounding confidently on the mountain heights [Hab. 3:19]

➤ His circumstances hadn't changed, but he had changed.

➤ Now he was walking by faith instead of sight. He was living by promises, not explanations.

Consider: Like Habakkuk, we must honestly talk to God about our difficulties, we must pray, we must meditate on God's Word, and we must be willing to experience fear and trembling as the Lord reveals Himself to us. But it will be worth it as we reach new summits of faith and discover new opportunities for growth and service.

Prayer: Pray for the Work of God (3:1-2) The prophet was now praying to the Lord and not arguing with the Lord. His prayer soon became praise and worship.

1. Knowing the will of God should motivate us to pray "Thy will be done."
The same God who ordains the end also ordains the means to the end.
2. Hearing God's Word generates faith in the heart of the child of God [Rom. 10:17].
3. Without faith, we can't pray effectively [Mark 11:22-24].
4. The Word of God and prayer must always go together (Acts 6:4; John 15:7) lest our praying becomes zeal without knowledge.

D.L. Moody: "I used to think I should close my Bible and pray for faith, but I came to see that it was in studying the Word that I was to get faith."

5. Habakkuk prayed because he was overwhelmed by God's splendor.

Hab. 3:2 "I stand in awe of your deeds."

6. He had seen a vision of the greatness of God in verses 3-15 which left him weak and helpless [v. 16]. All he could do was cry out to God.
7. Many people have the idea that it's always an enjoyable experience getting to know God in a deeper way, but that's not what the saints of God in the Bible would say.
 - ❖ Moses trembled at Mount Sinai when God gave the law (Heb. 12:18-21).
 - ❖ Joshua fell on his face before the Lord (Josh. 5:13-15), as did David (I Chron. 21:16).
 - ❖ Daniel became exhausted and ill after seeing the visions God gave him (Dan. 8:27; 10:11).
 - ❖ The vision of Christ's glory on the Mount of Transfiguration left Peter, James, and John facedown on the ground and filled with terror (Matt. 17:6).
 - ❖ When John saw the glorified Christ, he fell at His feet as though dead (Rev. 1:17).

A.W. Tozer: "To know God is at once the easiest and the most difficult thing in the world. God certainly has the ability to reveal Himself to us, for He can do anything; but it's a problem for God to find somebody who is ready to meet Him.

God doesn't reveal Himself to superficial saints who are only looking for "a new experience" they can brag about, or to curious Christians who want to "sample" deeper fellowship with God, but not at too great a price."

We are the ones who make it difficult to get to know God better.

James 4:8 "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you."

Isa. 66:2 "But on this one will I look," says the Lord, "on him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word."

Ps. 119:120 "My flesh trembles in fear of you. I stand in awe of your laws."

God had told Habakkuk that He was "working a work" in the world (Hab. 1:5). Now the prophet prayed God would keep that work alive and cause it to prosper. What God was doing wasn't the work Habakkuk would have chosen, but he accepted God's plan and prayed, "Thy will be done."

8. The prophet agreed: The people of Judah deserved to be chastened. God's chastening would work out for their good, but he asked that God's heart of love would reveal itself in mercy.

- ❖ He was like Moses when he interceded for the nation at Mount Sinai (Ex. 32) and at Kadesh Barnea (Num. 14).
- ❖ Certainly the Lord did show mercy to the Jews, for He preserved them in Babylon and then permitted a remnant to return to their land and establish the nation.
- ❖ The greatest need today is for intercessors. "And he saw that there was no man and wondered that there was no intercessor" [Isa. 59:16].

Faith: Affirm the Will of God [3:17-19] This is one of the greatest confessions of faith found anywhere in Scripture. Habakkuk has faced the frightening fact that his nation will be invaded by a merciless enemy. The prophet knows that many of the people will go into exile and many will be slain. The land will be ruined, and Jerusalem and the temple will be destroyed. Yet he tells God that he will trust Him no matter what happens!

"I will wait patiently on the Lord." If Habakkuk had depended on his feelings, he would never have made this great confession of faith. If Habakkuk looked ahead, he saw a nation heading for destruction, and that frightened him. When he looked within, he saw himself trembling with fear. When he looked around, he saw everything in the economy about to fall apart.

But when he looked up by faith, he saw God, and all his fears vanished.

To walk by faith means to focus on the greatness and glory of God.

One of the marks of faith is a willingness to wait patiently for the Lord to work.

- ❖ Habakkuk could wait quietly because he knew that God was at work in the world [1:5]
- ❖ He had prayed that God's work would be kept alive and strong [3:2].
- ❖ When you know that God is working in your life, you can afford to wait quietly and let Him have His way.
- ❖ God had commanded him to wait (2:3), and "God's commandments are God's enablements." No matter what we see and no matter how we feel, we must depend on God's promises and not allow ourselves to "fall apart."

Ps. 37:7 "Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for him."

Hab. 3:19 "I will rely on the Lord." Habakkuk began to bound up the mountain like a deer! Because of his faith in the Lord, he was able to stand and be as sure-footed as a deer; he was able to run swiftly and go higher than he'd ever gone before.

The Lord permits us to go through trials: they can draw us nearer to Him and lift us above the circumstances so that we walk on the heights with Him.

Hab. 3:19 The Lord God is my Strength, my personal bravery, and my invincible army; He makes my feet like hinds' feet and will make me to walk [not to stand still in terror, but to walk] and make [spiritual] progress upon my high places [of trouble, suffering, or responsibility]!

G. Campbell Morgan: "Our joy is in proportion to our trust. Our trust is in proportion to our knowledge of God."

Habakkuk teaches us:

- ❖ to face our doubts and questions honestly
- ❖ take them humbly to the Lord
- ❖ wait for His Word to teach us
- ❖ then worship Him no matter how we feel or what we see.

God doesn't always change the circumstances, but He can change us to meet the circumstances. That's what it means to live by faith.

Consider: It's not only what we pray, but also the character of the one praying that's crucial to getting our prayers answered.

John 15:16 Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.

Great promise and instruction for our prayer life.

Two things that must be right before you get your prayer answered:

1. Pray for the right thing. Ask God for something according to His will.

I John 5:14 And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask any thing according to His will, he heareth us:

Consider: We cannot expect Him to answer something that is not according to His will.

Rogers: "Prayer is not bending God's will to fit our will. Prayer is finding the will of God and getting in on it."

Consider: You can pray for the right thing and still not get your prayer answered.

2. The character of the one doing the praying is vitally important.

Key: Both content and character are necessary for your prayer to be answered.

The person must be praying according to the will of God.

The person praying must be living in the will of God.

Question: Which is more important? The content of the prayer or the character of the prayer?

The character of the person praying is vital. If you have the right character and are living in the will of God, THEN, He can teach you His will. Therefore, you can pray in the will of God.

Consider: If you are not living in the will of God, if your character is not right, God cannot teach you His will.

It is vital that you are qualified to pray. Then you will learn how to pray.

Consider: My prayer life is no greater than my personal life. You can pray for the right thing and not get your prayer answered.

Illustration: After the mighty victory at Jericho, the Israelites were shamed and defeated at a much smaller town, Ai. Joshua fell on his face before the Lord. God told him to get up!

Israel has sinned! Prayer is not the most important thing right now!

Quit praying and get right with God!

Rogers: "Prayer is not a smokescreen we can hide our sin in."

Ps. 66:18 If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me:

Rogers: "It is your LIFE that prays."

You can preach without being right with God.

You can teach without being right with God.

You can witness without being right with God.

You can sing without being right with God.

ALL of these are man to man. We can fool one another.

BUT, you can't pray and not be right with God. Prayer is man to God. We cannot fool God.

So we continue to do "man to man" external things. We don't want to "look God in the face."

When you "backslide," the first thing to go is your prayer life. It is not your preaching, teaching, soul winning, church work, singing, committee work, etc.

Your prayer life is a gauge of your relationship to God.

Key: Your prayer life has to be right before you can pray.

The flesh doesn't want to pray.

Rogers: "What you are in private before God is what you are. The reason some don't pray is because they are not much. The most important part of your prayer life is your heart condition."

James 5:16 The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

I John 3:22 And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.

Rogers: "If you are not keeping His commandments and doing those things that are pleasing to Him, don't expect to get your prayer answered. Answered prayer is not for rebels."

Recall: The content of the prayer and the character of the prayer are both necessary to get the prayer answered.

John 15:1-7 I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. [vinedresser = takes care of the vineyard] ² Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth [prunes] it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. ⁴ Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

⁶ If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. ⁷ If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

Key Point #1: You must abide in Christ to have your prayers answered. [note verse 7]

We are to be to Jesus Christ what a branch is to a grapevine.

The branch must accept the vine's purpose for its life and its existence. [see v. 4]

What is the purpose of the branch? To BEAR FRUIT

If you are not bearing fruit, you are a WORTHLESS BRANCH.

Branches on the vine are there to BEAR FRUIT.

John 15:16 Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit,...

If you want your prayer answered, you must abide in Christ so He can use your life as His instrument to produce HIS FRUIT.

Question: Have you ever prayed and asked God to heal you and He doesn't?

Possible Reason: God says, "Why should I increase your strength to give you more strength to serve the devil?"

Why should the vine pour life into the branch if the branch is not producing any fruit?

This kind of branch needs to be excised, to be cut out.

Rogers: What is the purpose of prayer? That God would be glorified by you bringing forth much fruit. The Father is glorified when we bear much fruit.

Consider: If my life doesn't glorify God, why should He answer my prayer?

Key Point #2: We are fruitful when we abide in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The branch doesn't produce the fruit.

The branch only bears the fruit.

The fruit is not the branches responsibility. It is the vine's responsibility.

The branches responsibility is to abide in the vine.

Question: Is it right for me to ask God to heal me if I am not totally surrendered to Him to do His will? Is it right for me to pray for a lost person if I am not willing to be the instrument God uses to win the lost? Is it right for me to pray for someone who needs help, mercy and compassion if I am not willing to be the instrument of mercy and compassion? Would it be right for the branch to pray to the vine and ask for there to be a lot of grapes on his branch and yet not be willing to be the instrument to bear those grapes?

Consider: If I am not abiding in the vine; if I am not available to the vine and the purpose of the vine, why should the Lord pour His strength into me?

v. 7 If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

Rogers: Don't pray for anything that you are not willing for Him to do through you.

"If you pray this but are not willing, it is religious babble."

Proof You Are Abiding = Fruitfulness

Fruit = an outward expression of an inward nature.

Consider: Many trees look alike until the fruit comes on. Then you can tell what kind of tree it is. By the fruit, you know the tree.

Key Point #3: The inward nature of a true Christian who is abiding in Christ will be revealed in his character.

The fruit is not building a big church, winning so many people to Jesus, etc.

The fruit is Gal. 5:22-23a But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, ²³ Meekness, temperance:

The life, nature and character of Jesus Christ will be produced in me by the Holy Spirit.

The seed is in the fruit. It is the seed that reproduces.

It is the fruit that makes the seed desirable.

It is the life of the Lord Jesus Christ in me when I abide in Him.

When I am in union with Him, His life comes out of me.

Then I will bring forth fruit and that fruit will remain.

John 15:16 Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain...

If I don't bring forth fruit, I am not abiding.

I have refused the One who has chosen and ordained me.

Key Point #4 What is done in the power of the Holy Spirit will never be destroyed.

It will remain. Everything else is wood, hay & stubble at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

If I want my prayer answered, I Must abide in Jesus Christ.

When I let the life of Jesus Christ flow through me,

When I am available for His purposes

When I am surrendered to Jesus Christ as a branch is to a vine,

Then, I am getting my life lined up with Jesus Christ so my prayer will be answered.

Key Point #5: He gives another qualification of the prayer:

John 15:7 If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

Life in communion with Jesus = abiding in Him

Life controlled by the Lord = His Word abiding in me

Both of these qualifications build a character of a life that prays.

Question: What does it mean for God's Word to abide in me?

Abide = to dwell with; to be permanently at home

When God's Word comes in to take up residence in me, it begins to abide in me.

Results: Word of God will control me

Is there anything in God's Word He has told me to do that I am not doing?
Then, why do I expect to get my prayer answered?

Key Point #6: Word of God will cleanse me.

John 15:2 Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth [prunes] it, that it may bring forth more fruit.

What is the instrument to prune me?

John 15:3 Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.

The Word of God is the pruning instrument; the clippers; the shears

What will God clip away from me?

The sin - the dead wood - the unproductive leaves - the foliage that is sapping life - amusements - television - hobbies - extraneous spending - reading - friendships -

What is wrong with these? What is wrong with leaves? What is wrong with branches?

Nothing except if they are not bearing fruit, what good are they?

They are not producing poisonous fruit; they are just sapping up stuff.

Consider: One day we will come to the Judgment Seat of Christ and think:

Why didn't I let my life count more for Jesus Christ? Why did I spend so much of my life on stuff that is not important? Just leaves & branches!

Rogers: Had you been in the Word and you were abiding in the Word and the Word was controlling you and cleansing you, the pruning shears would have done their work in you.

Consider: Sometimes, seemingly good things have to go. Beautiful branches and leaves have to go. You become CLEAN through God's Word.

John 15:7 If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, Ye Shall Ask What YE Will, and it shall be done unto you.

When you begin to abide in Jesus Christ and His life begins to flow in You, you get into the Word of God and it begins to control and cleanse you, it will communicate to you what is the will of God. Then, what you will and what God wills becomes the same will. Then, you will get the content of the prayer right. It is the character that helps me to get the content right.

Consider: The trouble with my prayer life may be ---ME!

Is there anything so valuable in my life that it is worth not having my prayers answered?

Lord, teach me to abide in You; to be surrendered to you for Your purpose.

May your Word abide in me. May it control me and cleanse me.