Rejoice Anyway

Read Habakkuk 2:1-5 & 3:17-19

Key verse: “I will rejoice in the Lord. I will rejoice in the God of my deliverance” (Habakkuk 3:18).

“God, do something about this mess!”

Those were not his exact words, but they’re pretty close. Habakkuk, a prophet of Israel’s southern kingdom, Judah, looked at the “mess” in his own country. He saw wickedness, injustice, and lawlessness on such a scale that he wondered why God did not act to clean things up.

Then God revealed to Habakkuk that He was going to use an invasion of the Babylonian armies to judge Judah. With that revelation, Habakkuk brought a different complaint to God: Why, God, would you use a people even more ungodly than Judah to punish Judah?

At one time or another, most of us have stood in Habakkuk’s sandals. We experience suffering, sickness, or grief, and we wonder “God, why?” We see the greedy and the corrupt getting rich while good, honest folks struggle, and we wonder, “God, why?” Like the prophet Habakkuk, we ask: “God, where are you? Why don’t you do something about this mess?”

Sometimes, God’s answers can surprise us. God’s “answer” to Habakkuk’s complaint was this: “the righteous person will live honestly” (Habakkuk 2:4). (A better translation is “the righteous person will live by faith / or by faithfulness.”) In effect, God was telling Habakkuk that, in the hard times that were ahead, living faithfully and trusting God would be more important than understanding why.

Habakkuk responds with one of the strongest and most beautiful expressions of faith in all of Scripture: “Though the fig tree doesn’t bloom, and there’s no produce on the vine; though the olive crop withers, and the fields don’t provide food; though the sheep is cut off from the pen, and there is no cattle in the stalls; I will rejoice in the Lord. I will rejoice in the God of my deliverance” (Habakkuk 3:17-18).

Sometimes the mess in our lives doesn’t get better right away. Sometimes we don’t get the answer we want. Those are the times when our faith must take hold: “Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see” (Hebrews 11:1).
Those are the times we need to praise God anyway. Those are the times we need to rejoice anyway.

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