

WHY ... is a question that crosses our minds and our lips.

- If God is such a good and loving God ... WHY does he allow evil in this world?
- If God is so wonderful and kind ... WHY does he allow a Christian teenager to suffer through the cancer treatments and then take her from her family and this world?
- If God is so powerful ... WHY didn't he stop Hurricane Florence before it caused some to die and many to lose everything?

These are just a few of the WHY'S believers wrestled with. King David did too in Psalm 13: **"How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and everyday have sorrow in my heart? How long will my enemy triumph over me?"**

Habakkuk, today's Minor Prophet, had some of his own WHY'S for God. The Lord addressed his issues in the 3 chapters of his book. God's answers are good ones for us to remember and hear again.

Habakkuk lived in Judah and did his prophetic thing just before the time the Babylonians would become the next super power once they defeated Assyria and Egypt. The Babylonians would be God's tool to punish his own people because of their rebellious ways.

Some of Habakkuk WHY'S ... WHY does evil seem to win and the wicked prosper? WHY do believers seem to lose and suffer?

Let's listen in as God answers Habakkuk's WHY, and learn again ... **"WE LIVE BY FAITH!"** From experience we know this is true: 1) Things in life often don't make sense and they aren't fair. *But, there's one thing we know for sure:* 2) The promises of God are certain.

(1) Has anyone ever told you or led to believe that life is fair and that everything makes sense? Well, they lied. Life isn't fair and things often don't make

sense to us. Things were a mess for Habakkuk. One of Judah's few Godly kings, Josiah, died. His son, Jehoiakim, was no friend of God, God's Word or God's prophets. Habakkuk's WHY in chapter 1 goes like this: **"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? Why do you make me look at injustice? Why do you tolerate wrongdoing? Destruction and violence are before me; there is strife, and conflict abounds. Therefore the law is paralyzed, and justice never prevails. The wicked hem in the righteous, so that justice is perverted."**

Sounds like our evening news, doesn't it? • Another child abused by those who are supposed to love them. • Another murder scene roped off with yellow tape. • Another courtroom video of a murderer's trial and sentencing. • Another case of domestic violence. • Another shooting of a police officer.

The situation in Judah in 650 BC was very similar our in America in 2018. That shouldn't surprise us, the Bible says in Ecclesiastes: **"Whatever is has already been, and what will be has been before."**

God answers Habakkuk's question slash complaint with this shocking news: **"I am raising up the Babylonians, that ruthless and impetuous people, who sweep across the whole earth, to seize dwelling places not their own."** That doesn't make sense to Habakkuk. The Babylonians weren't a world power. It didn't seem fair to Habakkuk either: **"God, your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrong. Why then do you tolerate the treacherous? Why then are you silent while the wicked swallow up those more righteous than themselves?"** *"God, you know what those Babylonians are like. They're a nasty bunch, and you're going to use them to punish and destroy your own people?"*

Many things in our lives don't make sense or seem fair either. WHY do believers suffer? WHY do bad things happen to faithful Christians? That's what you and I wrestle with, isn't it? It's also the

number one issue that causes people to doubt or not believe in God's existence. We hear them say: *"If your God is so loving, forgiving and kind, then why is there so much evil and trouble in this world? Why does your God allow all these things to happen?"*

(2) God's answer to Habakkuk's and our troubling questions isn't a secret: **Write down the revelation and make it plain on tablets so that a herald may run with it.** Habakkuk, grab some markers and a large sign board and write big enough so people can read as you walk around with it. Everyone will know what I, the Lord, have to say.

Are you ready to write? **"For the revelation awaits an appointed time; it speaks of the end and will not prove false. Though it linger, wait for it; it will certainly come and will not delay."** If God promises it, it will happen. But it will happen on God's schedule, not ours.

Right away that creates a problem. We are so impatient. We want things done right now. We see it in the problems people deal with. Do we really think that a problem that's been stewing for 10 years or even 3 months can be solved in a 60-minute counseling session? That isn't realistic. It takes time to correct attitudes and reactions. Those changes don't happen overnight.

In the Garden of Eden, God promised sinners that he'd send a head-crushing Rescuer. Adam and Eve assumed their first child was the One. When Cain was born Eve said: **"I have the man, the Lord."**

God took over 5,000 years to fulfill that promise. Did he keep it? Absolutely! If God promises it, it will happen - but on his timetable. Every promise he makes to us, he keeps in his appointed time.

When Jesus ascended, he promised us that he would return again to judge the living and the dead. It's been almost 2,000 years since he left and it hasn't happened. Will it happen? Absolutely! What God told Habakkuk, he tells you and me: **"Though it linger, wait for it; it will certainly come and will not delay."**

This is hard for us to do. We see the problems. We experience the pain. We feel the illnesses and troubles. And we want immediate solutions rather than trusting: *"God knows what he's doing and somehow this is all going to work for my good."*

God concludes his remarks to Habakkuk: **"The righteous person will live by faith."** How does a person become righteous? Trusting in yourself is a recipe for disaster every time. We can't depend on our own works. We sin. We can't meet God's level of perfection.

Jesus Christ – true God and true man – led a perfect life in person the whole time he was here on earth. He also got rid of our imperfections with his death on the cross. Here's how that benefits us: **"God made Jesus who had no sin ... to be sin for us, so that in Jesus ... we might become the righteousness of God."**

God credits Jesus' perfect life to your account. God credits Jesus death as the payment for your sins. By faith in Jesus you and I are declared right in God's sight – righteous. So now we walk and live by faith holding on to the promises of our God.

Let's back up to the WHY questions we often ask when we started. There's no simple solution that wraps this problem up in a neat bow and makes everyone feel good. Let's face it, though. We've been infected with sin since the day we were conceived. We're sinners who live with other sinners in a world of sinners. It shouldn't be a shock that we'll have problems here. That's exactly the kind of world Jesus told us we would live in: **"In this world you will have trouble."** He doesn't sugar coat it, but he does give us hope: **"But take heart, I have overcome the world."**

The God who allows us to suffer for a while here, also came to this world and suffered himself. When it comes to suffering he gets it.

People want a place without pain and suffering – God has promised that! The paradise he's designed is waiting for those who live by faith in Jesus. In the meantime, be patient as we live by faith and trust his promises:

- ... that what happens in our life has a purpose.
- ... that he will work it all out somehow, for our good.
- ... that he's always guiding and guarding and directing our lives.