

June 26, 2016

“Even When I Want To Freak Out...”

Habakkuk 3:16-19

16 I trembled inside when I heard this;
my lips quivered with fear.

My legs gave way beneath me,
and I shook in terror.

I will wait quietly for the coming day
when disaster will strike the people who invade us.

17 Even though the fig trees have no blossoms,
and there are no grapes on the vines;
even though the olive crop fails,
and the fields lie empty and barren;
even though the flocks die in the fields,
and the cattle barns are empty,

18 yet I will rejoice in the LORD!
I will be joyful in the God of my salvation!

19 The Sovereign LORD is my strength!
He makes me as surefooted as a deer,
able to tread upon the heights.

In 1999 my son Jesse and I went to Italy. We were with a tour group. What's nice about a tour is that you are taken to all the places you want to see when you think of Italy. The tour guide explains what you are seeing and the history, story or other information related to it. But, you have to move on kind of quickly. I often felt after the tour guide spoke that it would be good to linger there a while, but you can't. The group is moving on and if you don't want to get lost or miss the next attraction you can't linger you have to move on too. Some people do go back on their own after a tour to spend more time at these attractions.

We have been taking you through a tour of the Old Testament, but it has been just a tour. We've covered one book a week from the Old Testament. Our hope, however, is that you will go back and linger in some of these books. Now that you have an overview, revisit these books go back to the things you've heard in these messages, and take more time to read, study, and meditate on them.

The Old Testament seems to have a reoccurring theme of God calling a people showing them His favor, asking for their faith, and blessing that faith. Then after a time of great blessing they forget God, turn to other gods or idols, and disobey His law. To discipline and remind them that they must obey and serve Him only – for their own good, God brings some kind of trouble upon His people. This causes them to repent and return to God. And, unfortunately the pattern continues.

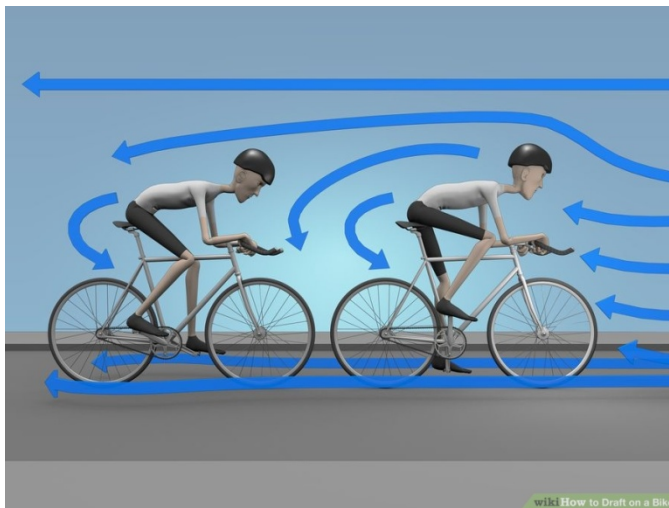
Many have the same kind of relationship with God today. However, God is seeking those who will worship Him in blessed and troubled times. Not because God has a big ego, but because God cares for us and loves us and knows how we can find rest and

peace in our lives... by trusting in Him with all our heart and not leaning on our own understanding, not trying to figure everything out on our own, but seeking Him in all we do; then HE will keep us on track.

Joe Herrmann is the manager of our Men's softball team. He expects each of the players to take a turn bringing a devotion after the game. After Monday's game Frank Donato gave the devotion and shared the following illustration:

Bicycle touring is a favorite pastime of mine. I enjoy and appreciate the exercise benefits, but it offers much more than that. There's just something satisfying about hitting the open road on a bike. You pack your bags, check your tires, fill your water bottle, and go. As you venture through the countryside, you get a unique view of your surroundings that you can't get when driving a car. People on the side sometimes wave or give you an encouraging word. When refueling or going to the bathroom it's not uncommon to strike up a conversation about where you've been or where you're going. It's really a lot of fun.

As much as I love to hit the road on my bike, there is one thing about bicycling that is not fun- headwind. Pedaling into a headwind is one of the worst experiences a cyclist can have. I'll gladly take a long uphill climb over a headwind. With every rotation of the wheels, the wind pushes you back, and the faster you try to go, the more the wind pushes you back. A headwind takes all the energy you can muster, and nearly sucks the life out of you. It tires you and steals the joy of a pleasant ride. There is a cure for headwind called "drafting."



A riding buddy blocks the wind while you follow close behind. As the two of you take turns riding ahead, each rider gets a much-needed rest.

When drafting, you fix your eyes on the back tire of the cyclist in front of you. This requires you to have a great deal of trust in the rider in front of you to pick a straight line, keep a steady pace and to point out pot holes and debris on the street. Most times I'm able to do this. I keep my front tire about an inch away from his back tire.

But sometimes I get nervous; I lose my trust in my fellow rider and move just to the left of his tire. I get most of the benefit of following him, but I retain a level of control.

As I noticed my tendency to sit off his left, I thought about how I often do the same as I follow Christ. I don't always follow him perfectly. I will sit just enough off to the side to try and dictate my own course, but stay close enough to Him to enjoy the benefits of walking in His grace. For example, when things get tough I find peace knowing He is in control, but I often try and smooth the path on my own. What I really need to do-what we all need to do-is to keep (our) eyes on God, trusting fully that He will lead (us) where (we) need to go and guide (us) through the hazards and potholes along the way.

Often we want to ride passed God and take control or we lag too far behind God's lead. Neither move will keep us safe. Only following close to God will help us, even when we want to freak out. We must trust God even when we have a lot of questions.

When my son was young (elementary School age and younger) he always had a lot of questions. One time he stayed with a family in the church while Ann and I attended a wedding (or something). When we went to pick Jesse up, the husband said, "did you ever try to watch a movie with this kid?" Ah... yeah. It's was impossible, because he had all these questions, who is this? Why is he doing that? ... but why? I'd be so busy answering questions I wouldn't know what was going on in the movie. There's nothing wrong with questions of course. As a matter of fact I have some questions:

Why does the sun lighten our hair, but darken our skin?

Why can't women put on mascara with their mouth closed?

Why doesn't glue stick to the inside of the bottle?

Why don't you ever see the headline "Psychic Wins Lottery"?

Why is "abbreviated" such a long word?

Why is a boxing ring square?

Why is it considered necessary to nail down the lid of a coffin?

Why is it that doctors call what they do "practice"?

Why is it that when you're driving and looking for an address, you turn down the volume on the radio?

Why is lemon juice made with artificial flavor, and dishwashing liquid is made with real lemons?

Why is the man who invests all your money called a broker?

Why is the time of day with the slowest traffic called rush hour?

You know that little indestructible black box that is used on planes? Why can't they make the whole plane out of the same substance?

Why isn't there mouse-flavored cat food?

Ha-bak-kuk had some questions for God. He begins with a question in

Habakkuk 1:2

How long, O LORD, must I call for help? But you do not listen!

Some great people in the Bible asked God questions, and were even angry with God. God can handle our questions and even our anger. It's a relationship, those things happen in a relationship, even in our relationship with God. But God doesn't always answer our questions. God always answers prayer; sometimes He says yes, sometimes He says no, and sometimes He says wait. But God doesn't always answer our tough questions, He may, but He may not. The question for us is, will we still be faithful to Him?

In our text today we have the prophet Ha-bak-kuk who goes from anxious questions to quiet rest, from trembling to triumph, from freaking out to rejoicing joyfully. He says in v16:

I trembled inside when I heard this;
my lips quivered with fear.
My legs gave way beneath me,
and I shook in terror.
I will wait quietly for the coming day
when disaster will strike the people who invade us. - Habakkuk 3:16

He had no strength left within himself and so he trembled inside – he was freaking out! Yet, he says he will rest or settle down as he waits quietly for the day when the Lord will act.

He is repeating what he said in v2:

Habakkuk 3:2
I have heard all about you, LORD.
I am filled with awe by your amazing works.
In this time of our deep need,
help us again as you did in years gone by.
And in your anger, remember your mercy.

We too must have these thoughts of the Lord when we are beginning to freak out: remember what you heard about the Lord. Be filled with awe at the amazing things that the Lord has done in the past (for you or for others). In the time of your deep need pray that he will help you again, and trust in the Lord's mercy. This is what helped Habakkuk recover from his freaking out; i.e. his stressful anxiety. Not only did it calm him, he was transported into a holy joy even in the midst of the trouble. So much so that he can say as he does in v17:

Even though the fig trees have no blossoms, [fig cakes furnished the people of that time with much of their food, but even though there was a lack of food...]
and there are no grapes on the vines; [a lack of drink]
even though the olive crop fails, [Hey, I'm Italian, I can't imagine an olive oil shortage;
and men imagine no meat]
and the fields lie empty and barren;

even though the flocks die in the fields,
and the cattle barns are empty,

just a side note we should be thankful that we enjoy and have so much and consider that a time could come when we don't have so much and we should not take for granted or stop thanking God for all we have and not waste or abuse it. Paul a follower of Jesus wrote:

1 Corinthians 7:29(from THE MESSAGE) – 30,31(from NLT)

I do want to point out, friends, that time is of the essence. There is no time to waste, so don't complicate your lives unnecessarily. Keep it simple —

Those who ... buy things should not be absorbed by their ...possessions. Those who use the things of the world should not become attached to them. For this world as we know it will soon pass away.

Habakkuk says even if I lose all these things ... (look at v18)

yet I will rejoice in the LORD! I will be joyful in the God of my salvation!

He resolves to delight in God; for when all else is gone our God is not gone. When all is good he enjoyed all in God, and when times were hard he enjoyed God in all.

How was Habakkuk able to do this, it is because of the lesson he learned and shared in chapter 2:4...

Habakkuk 2:4 NCV

The evil nation is very proud of itself;
it is not living as it should.

But those who are right with God will live by trusting in him.

Habakkuk 2:4 (THE MESSAGE)

"Look at that man, bloated by self-importance —
full of himself but soul-empty.

But the person in right standing before God
through loyal and steady believing
is fully alive, really alive.

In the New Testament Paul quoted Habakkuk in the context of the Good News of how God saves us, forgiving our sin, giving us eternal life, by making us right with God through faith in Jesus Christ:

Romans 1:17

This Good News tells us how God makes us right in his sight. This is accomplished from start to finish by faith. As the Scriptures say, "It is through faith that a righteous person has life."

We may face troubles of all kinds, but because of Jesus it is well with our soul and so in all times we can worship God, thank and praise God as the God of our salvation. This is the main ground of our joy in God, that He is our salvation. And God who is our eternal salvation in heaven is our strength here on earth ... look at v19

19 The Sovereign LORD is my strength!
He makes me as surefooted as a deer,
able to tread upon the heights.

He carries us in our journey here on earth, helps us over the difficulties, helping us to rise above them. He is our strength so we can be strong during hard times and spiritual warfare. He is our strength so that we can do all things through Christ. He is our strength and nothing is impossible with God, He is our strength and without Him we can do nothing. He makes us surefooted as we navigate life and the troubles we face in life. He treads or crushes the enemy, restores us; and through the experience brings us to a higher place makes us better people for having gone through the experience. And so the prophet who began his prayer with fear and trembling, concludes it with joy and triumph.

The name Ha-bak-kuk means “embraced (by God).” Even when we want to freak out, knowing that we are embraced by God is our strength.