



✦ WHEN GOD'S PLANS
DIFFER FROM OURS ✦

IN TIMING

Sermon Overview

Many Christians are praying for a revival, but it seems that God is not answering the prayer. The book of Habakkuk addresses why God sometimes does not answer prayer, and offers lessons in how to pray properly in spite of this.

Many Christians, seeing the increasingly fallen state of the world, are praying for revival. With so many believers praying, why does it seem like God is not answering their prayers?

In Habakkuk 3:1-19, Habakkuk finds himself in a similar situation: prayers for a revival, and an unexpected response from God.

¹ A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet. On shigionoth.

² Lord, I have heard of your fame; I stand in awe of your deeds, O Lord. Renew them in our day, in our time make them known; in wrath remember mercy.

³ God came from Teman, the Holy One from Mount Paran. [Selah] His glory covered the heavens and his praise filled the earth.

⁴ His splendor was like the sunrise; rays flashed from his hand, where his power was hidden.

⁵ Plague went before him; pestilence followed his steps.

⁶ He stood, and shook the earth; he looked, and made the nations tremble. The ancient mountains crumbled and the age-old hills collapsed. His ways are eternal.

⁷ I saw the tents of Cushan in distress, the dwellings of Midian in anguish.

⁸ Were you angry with the rivers, O Lord? Was your wrath against the streams? Did you rage against the sea when you rode with your horses and your victorious chariots?

⁹ You uncovered your bow, you called for many arrows. [Selah] You split the earth with rivers;

¹⁰ the mountains saw you and writhed. Torrents of water swept by; the deep roared and lifted its waves on high.

¹¹ Sun and moon stood still in the heavens at the glint of your flying arrows, at the lightning of your flashing spear.

¹² In wrath you strode through the earth and in anger you threshed the nations.

¹³ You came out to deliver your people, to save your anointed one. You crushed the leader of the land of wickedness, you stripped him from head to foot. [Selah]

¹⁴ With his own spear you pierced his head when his warriors stormed out to scatter us, gloating as though about to devour the wretched who were in hiding.

¹⁵ You trampled the sea with your horses, churning the great waters.

¹⁶ I heard and my heart pounded, my lips quivered at the sound; decay crept into my bones, and my legs trembled. Yet I will wait patiently for the day of calamity to come on the nation invading us.

¹⁷ Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls,

¹⁸ yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior.

¹⁹ The Sovereign Lord is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to go on the heights.

[For the director of music. On my stringed instruments.]

HABAKKUK 3:1-19

It can be discouraging when our prayers seem to go unanswered, but these moments are opportunities to grow in faith, trust, and knowledge of God.

ABOUT HABAKKUK

Habakkuk lived just prior to the Babylonian invasion and exile. The book of Habakkuk records a dialogue between him and God. Habakkuk arrogantly demands revival, and God answers by promising calamity in the form of Babylon.

THE RIGHTEOUS SHALL LIVE BY FAITH

The reason for the coming calamity was the unfaithfulness and idolatry of God's people. He promises to preserve Himself a remnant, however. No matter the trouble ahead, God is still in control and cares for His people.

ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

In the face of a darkening world, we must ask ourselves what God wants to say to us and teach us? When God permits calamity, He does not want us to blame Him, but look inward, purify ourselves, and grow closer to Him.

THREE LESSONS IN PRAYER

Habakkuk, hearing of the impending calamity, reflects:

Lord, I have heard of your fame; I stand in awe of your deeds, O Lord. Renew them in our day, in our time make them known; in wrath remember mercy.

HABAKKUK 3:2

Habakkuk accepts what is to come, recognizes the greatness of God, and asks God to do great things again. Habakkuk then delineates three lessons about effective prayer that he has learned throughout this dialogue.

HUMILITY

God wants to see brokenness and humility: personal repentance, not self-righteousness. Habakkuk learned to shift his mind from the problems at hand, to focus on God's glory alone.

ADORATION

Adoration is the expression of love for God in our prayer. There can be no effective prayer without understanding who God really is, and what it means to pray to Him. Habakkuk was captivated by God's righteousness and power.

CONCENTRATION

We must concentrate on what God loves. Habakkuk was asking for revival because of the problems facing his nation, not the desires of God for a true spiritual revival that brought glory to God, which God would accomplish through the Babylonian exile.

CONCLUSION

It is good to pray for a revival, but wanting the revival to solve cultural ills is different than wanting a revival to bring glory to Christ.

If judgment comes before a revival, we must cry out to God that His glory, majesty, and splendor is all that we seek, and His plans and timing are His own, and are right.