

FACING HARDSHIPS IN CHRISTIAN LIFE

Habakkuk's Objections and Response on Pain and Suffering

Text: Habakkuk 1:1-4; 2:4; 3:17-19

Introduction:

Pain is the ultimate teacher. (Roger Collier)

C.S. Lewis said, "We were promised sufferings. They were part of the program. We were even told in Matthew 'Blessed are they that mourn.'" Indeed, pain has been present since the beginning of life—mothers feel the pain of birth—and until the last moment of life—death.

The Gift of Pain - Illustration: anesthesia dentist / A Life [World] Without Pain by Dr. Paul Brand and Philip Yancey

Background:

Explain pain and suffering: in simple terms, pain is the thing that which we feel directly. Something that we can control if we take some medication to make us feel numb. While, suffering, is more of things that are happening outside us. Something indirectly, mostly when we try to fight pain, that's the time our suffering starts.

- Deuteronomistic Principle of Pain and Suffering (Deuteronomy 28)

Let's drop the idea of questioning God about why suffering is given to you. Eh nag sisimba naman ako, eh nag pepray naman ako, eh nag miministry naman ako, or the idea of "okay lang yan, magiging okay din ang lahat," or kasama yan sa plano ni Lord. There are dangers with those ideologies.

Let us understand how this drama of pain and suffering can set us free, through the life of Job. Let us read in Job 1:1-12, 20-22; 2:7-10. I really love this narrative.

Emphasis on verse 1:12 and 2:6, 1: 20-22 and 2:9-10.

Job chose to worship God despite of his sufferings; how did he worship God? Did he sing? Did he dance? NO! he cried out loud, Abba! Father! He is being honest in his feelings and realities.

This is what is difficult for us to understand, and we ignore this reality because in our culture today, we are living now that happiness is mandatory. As if you don't have the rights to feel the pain, grieve, and cry out loud. But Job worshipped God through crying out loud. Yet, in Psalm 34:17-18, "When the righteous cry for help, the LORD hears and delivers them out of all their troubles. The LORD is near to the broken hearted and saves the crushed in spirit."

- Relativity of Pain and Suffering
- MMO Gaming – quests, challenges, to gain experience

Main Idea:

Habakkuk complaining and lamenting to God. He was questioning God. (1:1-4, 13)

Blaming God as if bad things come from him. Harold Kushner, "Bad things do happen to good people in this world, but it is not God who wills it. Innocent people do suffer misfortunes in this life. Things happen to them far worse than they deserve—they lose their jobs, they get sick, their children suffer or make them suffer. But when it happens, it does not represent God punishing them for something they did wrong. The misfortunes do not come from God at all."

God answered that he was already at work even before Habakkuk's complaints. (1:5-11)

We do not have the answers for this; the very question is "Why did a good God allow this to happen? Where was God during this incident?" He could have stopped the robbers to enter their place or let a roaming security that would cause the robbers to just flee from their plan. This is unfathomable, why does pain exist? Maybe it would be better if there is no pain in this world.

Perfect time – never delays. (2:3) Other people rely on their might, power, riches, and possession. (2:4a) - The kind of faith that Habakkuk describes, and that the NT authors promote, is continuing trust in God and clinging to God's promises, even in the darkest days.

But Christians—the called out righteous ones—are to live by faith. (2:4b)

Pain and suffering are inevitable—we should not ignore nor skip the process of it—but we have God on our side and He will be with us journeying in this path of life. Let us accept this truth and celebrate life by seeing it in a different perspective by being authentic towards our wholeness as we possess the image of God. Putting our confidence on the Triune God who suffers for us and with us because we know that He can relate with our pain and suffering.

God did not promise that life would be easier with Him, yet God promised that in the midst of sufferings He will always be with us.

How did Paul respond?

Romans 8:18, "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us." Philippians 3:7-14, "12 Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. 13 Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus."

How did Christ respond?

Matthew 26:36-45: Jesus praying three times – in this the same story, in Luke's version, he said, "And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground" (22:44).

John 11:35, "Jesus wept."

- Suffered Hunger – Matthew 4
- Suffered Rejection
 - He was rejected in the womb
 - He was rejected after birth
 - He was rejected by the Jews
 - His own disciples rejected him
 - His Father rejected him
- Suffered Death – Crucified – Isaiah 53:5
 - Scourged - Matt. 27:26
 - Beaten - Luke 22:63-64
 - Spit upon - Matt. 27:30
 - Beard Plucked from His Face - Isa. 50:6
 - Mocked - Matt. 27:26-29

- Stripped Naked - Matt. 27:35
- Nailed to the Cross - Matt. 27:38; John 20:25

Christ sympathizes with you, in Hebrews 4:15, "For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin." Dane Ortlund explained that "In our pain, Jesus is pained...His human nature engages our troubles comprehensively. His is a love that cannot be held back when he sees his people in pain. Jesus is able to sympathize. He "co-suffers" with us."

Conclusion:

Same with Jesus, Habakkuk's response was prayer. As Christians, this is our default setting. NT Wright says, "That is our vocation: to be in prayer, perhaps wordless prayer, at the point where the world is in pain." (temptation to be pragmatic or solution-oriented).

Habakkuk 3:17-19, Rejoicing! Yet even amid suffering and loss, Habakkuk has learned that he can trust God, and with that trust comes great joy, not in circumstances but in God himself: yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will take joy in the God of my salvation. Yahweh has become Habakkuk's strength

Deer's feet, Habakkuk can have sure-footed confidence in God and can live on the heights even amid extreme circumstances

Read 1 Peter 2:21-25

"As much as possible, we work hard, try hard, and do the impossible to experience the impossible. We Filipinos work so hard, two or three jobs just to have a good life. It doesn't matter how hard the work is as long as it pays well, it is worth it. Same with the sufferings of Christians. We endure the pain and the suffering because we have a hope that soon, there will be no more tears for Jesus will come again and He will take us in the presence of our Father where there is no more sufferings. And because we suffered here on earth, we will be able to really enjoy the peace, love, and grace that we are going to experience." (Christian Battung)

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