

CYCLES OF CHANGE

Text: Habakkuk 1:1-3:19

Key Word: Cycle

Key Thought: There Are a Number of Cycles That Take Place in Order to Bring about Change

In this book the prophet Habakkuk unfolds his heart. His soul's experience is displayed for an entire nation to contemplate.

The name "*Habakkuk*" means "*to embrace.*"

"Habakkuk signifies an embracer, or one who embraces another, taking him into his arms. He embraces his people, and takes them into his arms, i.e., he comforts them and holds them up, as one embraces a weeping child, to quiet it with the assurance that, if God wills, it shall soon be better."

Martin Luther

Nations, people groups, churches and individuals all seem to go through cycles in their lifetime. Some are healthy and others are very challenging. Unfortunately, most of us have had to learn a number of lessons "*the hard way.*"

It has been said that the trouble with studying history is that we seldom learn from it. We continue to repeat the mistakes that others have made. If you are a parent, you've probably said to your child at one time or another that you don't want them making the same mistakes as you have. You try to help them avoid the pain associated with choosing the wrong direction in life.

Today I want to look at a series of cycles that unfortunately have repeated themselves time and time again throughout history.

What Are the Cycles That Often Take Place in Order to Bring about a Positive Change?

I. THE CYCLE OF DESTRUCTION/DESPAIR (1:2-4)

II. THE CYCLE OF DELAY (1:5; 2:3)

III. THE CYCLE OF DELIVERANCE (2:14,20)

IV. THE CYCLE OF DELIGHT (3:2,17,18)

I. THE CYCLE OF DESTRUCTION/DESPAIR (1:2-4)

“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?

3. Why do you make me look at injustice? Why do you tolerate wrong? Destruction and violence are before me; there is strife, and conflict abounds.

4. Therefore the law is paralysed, and justice never prevails. The wicked hem in the righteous, so that justice is perverted.”

Habakkuk 1:2-4

Can you identify with these words? If so, you are among the vast numbers of people worldwide who live this kind of horror on a daily basis. We now use terms such as **“ethnic cleansing”** to describe the horrific injustices that occur on a moment by moment basis in some areas of our world.

The prophet has been able to put into words what many people have felt over the years. Many nations such as Africa, South and Central America, Asia and Europe look in despair as they see the destruction that fully surrounds them.

Why is it that we as human beings often have to reach bottom before we look up? It seems like it takes something massive before we even begin to take steps to avert it. God often allows nations/people to reach this end before things stir up in our hearts. There comes a time when we say, *“Enough is Enough.”*

“There may be times when we are powerless to prevent injustice, but there must never be a time when we fail to protest.”

[Elie Wiesel](#)

“The only thing needed for evil to prevail is for good men to do nothing.”

Men sometimes think that because God has not punished sin immediately that they could keep on going into deeper sin with no consequences.

“When the sentence for a crime is not quickly carried out, the hearts of the people are filled with schemes to do wrong.”

Ecclesiastes 8:11

II. THE CYCLE OF DELAY (1:5; 2:3)

Unfortunately, not everything changes overnight for the better. Yet we need to know that God does hear our prayers and sees the injustice placed upon us. He heard the cries of the children of Israel under their cruel Egyptian taskmasters. He was not taken off guard either when the Babylonians created a hell on earth for their Israelis captives.

God raised up His prophets during this time to proclaim that His “**Discipline of Delay**” was about to end. **I believe that God often uses delay as a way of drawing us closer to Him so we can clearly hear His voice.** Those who choose to waste this time will see no benefit in it and continue to complain. But God always has a plan even though we may not be able to recognize it at work.

“Look at the nations and watch — and be utterly amazed. For I am going to do something in your days that you would not believe, even if you were told.”

Habakkuk 1:5

“For the revelation awaits an appointed time; it speaks of the end and will not prove false. Though it lingers, wait for it; it will certainly come and will not delay.”

Habakkuk 2:3

*** That great American hero, editor, school teacher, and Presbyterian clergyman Elijah Lovejoy left the pulpit and returned to the press in order to be sure his words reached more people. The Civil War might have been averted and a peaceful emancipation of slaves achieved had there been more like him.

After observing one lynching, Lovejoy was committed forever to fighting uncompromisingly the awful sin of slavery. Mob action was brought against him time after time; neither this nor many threats and attempts on his life deterred him. Repeated destruction of his presses did not stop him. “If by compromise is meant that I should cease from my duty, I cannot make it. I fear God more than I fear man. Crush me if you will, but I shall die at my post . . . ”

And he did, four days later, at the hands of another mob. No one of the ruffians was prosecuted or indicted or punished in any way for this murder. (Some of Lovejoy’s defenders were prosecuted! One of the mob assassins was later elected mayor of Alton!)

However, note this: One young man was around who was deeply moved by the Lovejoy martyrdom. He had just been elected to the Illinois legislature. His name was Abraham Lincoln. ***

Paul Simon
“Elijah Lovejoy”

III. THE CYCLE OF DELIVERANCE (2:13,14,20)

*“Has not the LORD Almighty determined that the people’s labor is only fuel for the fire, that the nations exhaust themselves for nothing?
14. For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.”*

Habakkuk 2:13,14

There comes a time when we must admit to the fact that we can do nothing in and of ourselves to change our circumstances. It is a job greater than our wisdom or resources can handle.

No one has the ability to fill the whole earth with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD but God Himself. This is where His sovereign will comes to the forefront. There is the man-part and there is a God-part. We cannot do His part and He will NOT do our part. We need to come to an acknowledgement of whose turn it is to be involved.

“But the LORD is in his holy temple; let all the earth be silent before him.”

Habakkuk 2:20

When God begins His work of delivering His people, we need to know when to step back. Moses simply raised His staff and God separated the waters of the Red Sea. Even days before Moses understood that he was given the simple job of standing before Pharaoh and proclaiming the message of letting God’s people go. It was God’s part to send the plagues in order to convince Pharaoh.

When I think of waters covering the sea, I get the idea of what God is trying to portray to His people. Water fills every crevice, crook and curvature in the sea bed. Nothing is left uncovered. So it will be upon our earth. Not even a tiny area will escape the glory of God. No one will be able to hide away from the glory of the living God.

We serve a delivering God today. People worldwide are being delivered from evil spirits, long-term diseases, sinful habits and past bondages. Canada, our day is awaiting. Our deliverance is at hand. Prayer is going up across this great nation buy those who desire to see God’s hand at work. We often have asked God why has it taken so long.

“There are some things only learned in a fiery furnace.”

*Oswald Chambers
“Run Today’s Race”*

IV. THE CYCLE OF DELIGHT (3:2,17,18)

As God fulfills His plans before our eyes we can often do nothing but stand in awe of His majesty and greatness. It brings us to a time of delighting in the wonderful God that we serve. He is still awesome in this place.

“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

We may not see everything we have been hoping and praying for, but we need to keep our hopes strong in the LORD. As we do He is able to make our feet swift and help us rise up to new heights in God. Nothing and no one can keep us from the reward of waiting in patience for the Lord's will to be done.

“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.”

Habakkuk 3:17,18

*** God sometimes allows us to enter into discouraging situations for the primary purpose of testing our faith. At such times we must refuse to give up in despair. Like Jonah in the belly of the great fish, we must turn to the Lord when our soul is fainting within us, trusting Him completely.

James H. McConkey wrote, *“What can you do when you are about to faint physically? You can't DO anything! In your weakness you just fall upon the shoulders of some strong loved one, lean hard, and rest until your strength returns. The same is true when you are tempted to faint under adversity. The Lord's message to us is 'Be still, and know that I am God' (Psalm 46:10).*

*“Our Daily Bread”
Monday, March 26*

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Date: Dec 10/17

Place: FCA

Time: 10:30 Am

Song: Awesome in this Place - C, D

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