

# Can I Make A Difference?

## *Habakkuk*

### **Despair About The State Of The World.**

In 2004 Lyn and I stayed for two weeks on Saipan in the Northern Marianas group of islands in the Pacific. Saipan was the place where the largest banzai charge of WW2 by Japanese soldiers took place. At that time Japanese soldiers were indoctrinated and taught never to surrender, believing it was better to die an honourable death than suffer the humiliation of capture. So when they were losing the battle for Saipan, more than 3000 of them, some of them armed with nothing more than a knife on a stick, charged the machine guns of the United States marines. It was senseless slaughter. Lyn and I also stood at the top of what are now known as the suicide cliffs, where hundreds of parents threw their children on to the rocks below, then jumped to their deaths. It was a tragic waste of life that to us doesn't make any sense. Now we could say that that was another time – another era. Things are different now. But are they really?

Let's bring this up to date. How do we make sense of the mother who proudly holds up a photo of her daughter who has detonated a bomb belt killing men, women and children? Children just like her own. How do we make sense of the 911 terrorists who fly airliners into buildings, or who bomb the London underground, or the rail system in Madrid? How do we make sense of a Bernie Madoff, the darling of Wall Street, who is now working out a 150 year prison sentence for the largest con in history? And what does Bernie Madoff say about all the lives he ruined through his greed? He uses two words, one of which I can't use here, but the other word is "you". How do you make sense of the fact that the Prime Minister of Britain gets paid 142,500 pounds a year, and the manager of the national football team gets more than 4 million a year after tax? This is the world we live in.

Listen to the lament of one man who struggled to make sense of the world around him.

***"The oracle that Habakkuk the prophet received. 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 wrong? 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." (Habakkuk 1:1-4)***

This is the cry of a man who is taking an interest in what's happening in his nation and his world. He's a devout man. He's a righteous man. He's a man who believed that God is almighty, but he doesn't see much evidence of God taking any notice of what's happening in his world. Does this feel a little bit familiar to you? Do you find yourself watching the news of the war in Afghanistan, conflict in the Gaza strip, the blame game over the oil spill off the coast of Louisiana, images of drunken teenagers vomiting after a weekend party, crooked politicians, priests who have been abusing children – do you find yourself crying out to God for answers? This is Habakkuk. He's a man with a concern for his nation and his world. He believes in God, but he doesn't see God doing too much. Everything is falling apart, and Habakkuk asks "God where are you? What are you doing about it?"

### **Complaining to God**

Top marks to Habakkuk. Most of us don't turn our complaints to God. We moan and bellyache to our friends. We paste our complaints on face book. If we really get uptight we might write a letter to a newspaper. But not Habakkuk. He let God have it. Habakkuk complained to God about what was happening in his world. He even went so far as to blame God for not coming and doing something about it. "Why don't you listen to me God? When are you going to show up and do something about this mess? Why do you let this happen? Why do you make me look at all this stuff that is going on? Why don't you do something?" Top marks to Habakkuk. At least he turned his complaints into prayer, which is more than most of us do.

But let me warn you. It's a dangerous thing to start complaining to God about the state of the nation and the state of the world, because it's likely God will do a Habakkuk on you. You see, God's response was "OK then, if you are so concerned about what is happening to the nation and the world, I'll make you the answer to your own prayers. You can be my prophet. I'll use you to speak out about these things you are so concerned about. We will see how concerned you really are. You can be my mouthpiece and speak for me. Here's what you do. You listen to me, then speak the words I give you".

### **God can make you into a prophet.**

Habakkuk never intended being a prophet. He didn't have any blinding vision. He was just an ordinary person who was concerned about the state of his world, and he began to talk to God about what he saw. He wasn't a prophet in the usual sense, for when he delivered his message, he didn't speak it, but wrote it. He wrote it on a poster, so that everyone going past could see. One church where I was Pastor was set on a hill, right opposite a shopping centre and at a place where people had to stop at traffic lights. So on special occasions, we used the fence outside our church as a billboard for advertising. One Easter we put up a big banner that said "Jesus is dying to meet you". At Christmas we put up another that said "Santa Claus never died for anybody". I saw a sign outside one church that said "If you are looking for a sign from God to attend church – this is it!"

Another unusual thing about Habakkuk's prophecy was that it was set to music. Very few Christian musicians have seen how prophetic Christian music can be used. We have seen the use of music for evangelism and for worship, but there is a place for songs which express how God is feeling about the nation. If you are a songwriter, perhaps you are someone God could use to express how he is feeling about his world.

You may be thinking "Who, me?" "I'm just a nobody!" I'm sure that's what Habakkuk said. "Who, me?" Habakkuk was a virtual unknown. We don't know anything about him. We don't even know exactly how to pronounce his name, or what his name means. It might mean "embrace" but it could also be translated "vegetable". Be careful parents when you name your kids. They are stuck with your choice for a long time! Habakkuk was just a nobody. But God delights in taking the nobodies of this world to prove to the somebody's just what he can do.

### **God uses nobodies.**

In 1930 God took a young woman in England who worked as a maid – a nobody – and sent her to China. Gladys Aylwood was only five feet tall, but she did some amazing things for God in China. On one occasion when there was a prison riot, and the Police were too scared to go into the prison, she stepped into the prison alone, and brought peace in the name of Jesus. Jackie Pullinger was another person like Gladys Aylwood. A single woman who began a work amongst drug addicts in the forbidden city in Hong Kong. You can read her amazing story of how God used a nobody like her in the book "Chasing The Dragon." God loves getting a hold of the nobodies and making them into a somebody. Can I make a difference? Can you? With God we can.

### **How did God get a hold of Habakkuk?**

#### **1. He got hold of his mind.**

God blew his mind. He stretched it. God showed him what was really happening in his world. He showed Habakkuk things that he found hard to believe, let alone understand. God showed him that he was going to use the Babylonians to straighten out the nation of Israel. That would be the same as me standing before you this evening and telling you that God was going to use the Taliban to bring the church to repentance. You start asking God about our world and he will begin to let you see events the way he sees them. It will stretch your mind.

#### **2. He got hold of his will.**

God had to almost force Habakkuk to do something about what he saw. There are many Christians who are interested in what is happening in world events. They watch the news. They read the latest books. But God is not looking for interested people. He is looking for people of action, who will act on what they know.

### **3. God got hold of his heart – his emotions.**

God caused Habakkuk to feel what he was feeling. God is looking for a prophetic people, who feel what he is feeling. What makes him angry. What makes him glad. People who can share his joy and grief. People who can feel his agony. People whose hearts beat with the same rhythm as his heart. God gives prophetic words to those who understand his heart and he commissions them to speak for him.

So how does this work in practice? Here are two examples. One is historical, on a world scale that reveals how God uses people to reveal his purposes. The other is much more related to life as we live it. Here's the big one first.

In 1911, six years before the Russian Revolution, long before the Communists took power in Russia, a Godly Bishop named Aristocoli was concerned about what was happening in his nation. He began asking the Lord about the nation of Russia. What I'm about to read to you is what the Lord gave him. This prophecy was carried out of Russia by Mother Barbara, who became the Abbess of a monastery in Jerusalem. Remember, this word was given in 1911, nearly 100 years ago.

"An evil will shortly take Russia, and wherever this evil comes, rivers of blood will flow. This evil will take the whole world and wherever it goes, rivers of blood will flow because of it. It is not the Russian soul, but an imposition on the Russian soul. It is not an ideology, or a philosophy, but a spirit from hell. In the last days Germany will be divided in two. France will be just nothing. Italy will be judged by natural disasters. Britain will lose her empire and all her colonies and will come to almost total ruin, but will be saved by praying women. America will feed the world but will finally collapse. Russia and China will neutralize each other. Finally Russia will be free, and from her, believers will go forth and turn many from the nations to God."

As I have said recently, every prophetic utterance should be weighed and tested, but in the 99 years since that word was given, much of it has already been fulfilled. Do you see might happen when Godly people begin to talk to him about the state of the nation and the world? He did it with Habakkuk. If you listen, perhaps he has something he wants to say to you and through you.

Here's another example of listening to the Lord that many of us can relate to.

A pastor I know had a woman in his church who was trying to share Jesus with her neighbour. She had tried all sorts of fancy techniques but nothing was getting through. So she began to pray for her neighbour, and asked the Lord what he wanted to say to her neighbour. As she prayed, the only thing she sensed the Lord saying was "Don't be afraid". She didn't understand why God would want to say that to her neighbour, but as she was having coffee with her neighbour later that morning she told the woman that she had been praying for her. She said "As I was praying for you, I felt the Lord wanted to say to you "Don't be afraid". At that the woman burst into tears. She said "I've just opened my mail and received a letter from the hospital, calling me in for an operation. I'm scared stiff. Tell me about your God who knew!" Now that woman can't stop asking questions about a God who knew she was afraid.

What if the Spirit of God were to anoint you, and make you a prophet this week? Do you think he could use you to be a prophetic person? Why don't you try talking to Him about the things that concern you. Listen and see what He says. See if he doesn't involve you in being the answer to your own prayers. Can you make a difference? With God you can.

*David McChesney, Westlake Church in Nyon, Switzerland*