

NOW WAIT A MINUTE GOD! II**Habakkuk 1:1-2:1****(Read Habakkuk 1:1-2:1)**

Intro: Well my intro last week was long enough for several weeks so I'll not put you through that again. I don't apologize for it though since it prepared us for a study that will cover a couple months. I introduced the series I have entitled REBOOTING and compared the work God does of transforming us, to the often miraculous wonder of merely rebooting an electronic device when that device is not functioning correctly or not functioning at all, and having that simple step be the solution needed in the place of an expensive or extensive repair. After that long intro, I moved into a study of Habakkuk and barely got started on his oracle when time ran out. So let me give a little review.

We met the prophet Habakkuk. He was a contemporary of Jeremiah and several other colleagues whose names you see in the later pages of your Old Testament. Habakkuk, in a similar way to his contemporary, Jeremiah, was puzzled and even angered by God's seeming silence in the midst of the cries of terror from his people in Judah. He uses strong language in his questioning of God as he blurts "*I cry out for help and you will not hear! I cry "Violence!" and you don't save! Why do you idly look at wrong? You never do justice!*" which leads to an age old question . . .

If God really exists, why does he allow violence, wrong, and injustice?

- Which is a good question. I reminded you then, as I will again today, and all through my teaching, that God is big enough to handle our questions. And it's even better when we honestly wrestle with our questions the way Habakkuk does here – by going directly and honestly to God. We need to remember though, that *God acts on his time schedule*. And because of that, no matter what the prophet thought, Habakkuk's complaints *did not fall on deaf ears*. In fact, God was already working on a plan. But it was NOT the plan Habakkuk had in mind. C. S. Lewis wrote in his book *A GRIEF OBSERVED*, which are his deep and wrenching reflections after his wife died, "*The best is perhaps what we understand the least.*" and Habakkuk is a perfect example of this and we have soooooo much to learn from it. We need to know that when the easy, sing-song bumper sticker theology of *GOD'S GOT THIS!* seems empty and hollow, God **REALLY DOES** have it. That's why we need to look at it a bit more. First . . .

Confronting God with our questions, concerns, and complaints is a good thing . . . IF they are, indeed, resolved

- As we pointed out last week, the Southern Kingdom of Judah was in a hot mess. They were at the literal crossroads of clashes between empires on their east and empires on their west. The Northern Kingdom, which was known as Israel, had disintegrated years before in a way that Judah was destined to follow. You see, the troubles pressing in from the outside, while they were real and serious, were not by any stretch of the imagination the only issues Judah faced. Not by a long shot. Judah had forgotten they were God's people. Once upon a time he had told them, *For I am the Lord your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy*. Leviticus 11:44, but that rarely came to mind these days – unless you were someone like Habakkuk. Instead, corruption, injustice, and perversion and anything else that was unrighteous and sinful was what characterized them as a people. Truth be told – it might sound familiar to the world we live in. And truth be told, it would do us well, if we don't fall into the trap of thinking, we are not part of the problem. But I digress . . .
- Habakkuk goes to God with his cry for help. Why God?! Al Enns, commenting on this passage writes, "*One of the most pressing and persistent religious questions of our time is the problem which confronted Habakkuk. More urgent than the credibility of miracles or the reconciliation of science and the scriptures is the enigma of evil. Why does God allow suffering and injustice? Why are babies born blind? Why are promising young lives snuffed out? Why are wars allowed to mutilate the earth and its occupants?*"
- You've probably asked questions like this. I have. I also know people who have given up on God because these questions were unanswered for them. Actually, sometimes the answers are there rather clearly, but the questioner doesn't like what they hear.
- This is because God does answer and it's good for us to listen in – because he answers us too. His solutions are not our solutions – but he is still very much in charge – always has been, always will be, and always has our best in mind.

- I said a bit ago that our questioning of God is only helpful if that questioning is resolved. If our questions only bring more questions, or worse yet, unresolved doubt, then we are barking up the wrong tree. We cannot survive on a diet of doubt because spiritual starvation will quickly set in and spiritual death will follow. This is why I am frustrated with preachers who preach from their doubts, or worse yet – those who preach their own questions and sow confusion in their listeners. If a preacher cannot resolve his or her questions, they need to step away from the pulpit until they do. Paul was speaking of the gift of tongues being used in worship without interpretation when he said *For God is not a God of confusion* in 1 Corinthians 14:33a, but it is a truth in every way. God does not seek to confuse and he will not leave us dangling in our doubt. As we seek him, he will answer.

- And as Habakkuk sought God he was astounded at the answer he gets . . .

You're not going to believe it, but you better believe it. You just watch!

- God is at work. He's not forgotten. In fact, *I am raising up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation* (v. 6a). The problem only becomes more evident in Habakkuk's mind when the answer is given. And it's a truly picture of the meaning of

*For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord.*

*For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts. Isaiah 55:8-9*

- The judgment Habakkuk was crying out to God for was on its way and it was more than he bargained for. It didn't fit the neat package he had in mind. Now I don't know what he was thinking of in the way of appropriate judgment, but it certainly wasn't by the hand of a dreaded and fearsome hoard. Habakkuk had cried violence to God and here was a people of violence. Mighty God was going to use *guilty men whose own might is their God!* (v. 11) Holy God was using an unholy weapon to enforce his holiness.
- And that's when Habakkuk says . . .

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- *Are you not from everlasting, O Lord my God, my Holy One? . . . O Lord, you have ordained them as a judgment, and you, O Rock, have established them for reproof. You who are of purer eyes than to see evil and cannot look at wrong, why do you idly look at traitors and remain silent when the wicked swallows up the man more righteous than he?* (vv. 12-13). He butters God up a little, and then he reminds God of who he is. And then he reminds God of who his people in Judah are and who the Chaldeans are and assures God that, yes, judgement his prerogative but, **"YOU'RE GOING TO USE THEM?! Why, they're worse than we are for goodness sake!"**.
- Al Enns puts it this way, *"God, are you going to let an evil foe overrun people more righteous than themselves? Can a holy God help the more wicked to triumph? Is it not his nature to reward those who are better?"* And the question is for Judah and for Habakkuk, are we really better? And will God's rebooting of his people entail a judgment that involves what we cannot fathom? It often does. Think about Lewis's words I quoted earlier, *"The best is perhaps what we understand the least."*
- This is where Enn's words that you see in your worship folder come in, *"God's dealing with man cannot be expressed in simple formulas. Divine logic is far above and beyond human knowledge and perception. Luther exclaimed, "The profound and sublime wisdom of God lies hidden; for he is strange in his dealings both with his saints and with his foes. All this surpasses the understanding and experience of the human mind."*
- And so Habakkuk heads off to figure this all out. He knows in his heart of hearts the ultimate truth . . .

Conclusion: God knows what he's doing

- He will answer and Habakkuk will see things his way. Habakkuk's rebooting is progressing. He just needs to know he's in the hands of the master repairman.
- Remember last week when I told you about my computer troubles that happened to me on Friday morning as I was trying to write last week's talk. Well – this week, my computer tried some even more frustrating hijinks. I would type for a few minutes and then a blue screen would suddenly appear with a sad face and

this text "*Your device ran into a problem and needs to restart. We're just collecting some error info, and then we'll restart for you.*" There was nothing I could do! I had to wait for them to collect their info and restart. That would have been fine – except – any work that I had not saved on this sermon was lost!!!! One time was bad enough, but I took them at their word (whoever they was – maybe they are in Moscow or something – so I hope they read my sermon and get saved), and I reconstructed the paragraph or so that I had lost and proceeded on. But IT HAPPENED AGAIN! So I had to reconstruct some more. Then I got wise, and began saving the document every few sentences. It was a pain, but at least I didn't lose as much. And IT HAPPENED AGAIN! And again. Again I cried out to Mary! And she asked me, with a smirk, if I'd rebooted. AND I HAD, I'll have you know. And when she couldn't figure it out, I loaded the sermon onto a flash drive and packed my computer into the car and took it off to Armerdyne – I had to turn to a master repairman – I had confidence as Kathy Cleghorn's grandson, Sheldon, took my info with quiet confidence, I knew he knew what he was doing.

- Do you know that in all the craziness of this world, God knows what he's doing? We can put our hands up in the air and say, "Now wait a minute Lord!" and he's good with it. But know this, he's rebooting his Church (that's us), so let watch and wait for what he is saying to us. Amen.