

Do you remember the game show **Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?** First aired on ABC in 1999, it involved contestants answering questions of increasing difficulty. The original host, Regis Philbin, would put a question to the contestant, they would answer, and he would confirm: “*is that your final answer?*”

Last week we saw that Habakkuk had many questions for God. We discovered that so sovereign is our God that there is even room in our submission and obedience for earnest asking of questions! With this privilege is the responsibility to “keep watch to see what He will speak to me”. But what is God’s answer?

Proposition

Our series in Habakkuk is “**Even If**”. As this new year unfolds, we are exploring the challenge of living with joyful resolve and resilience, even when there may be difficulty and despair around us.

Like many OT prophets, Habakkuk was exercised about the state of his nation. Northern Israel had long been conquered by Assyria (**722 BC**). Judah would be captured by Babylon (**586 BC**). In the decades before this, Habakkuk prophesied. He asked “*How long, O Lord?*” (1:2) and then asked, “*can You not do something about this God?*” (1:12) In the first chapter there were two laments (vv.1-4 and vv.12-19).

Habakkuk’s book seems to be a celebration of uncertainty! And his work was more about talking to God regarding the people, rather than making prophetic proclamations to the people, on God’s behalf. Lest we think this is problematic, consider what celebrated professor at Dallas Theological Seminary, Howard Hendricks once said, “*It is more important to talk to God about men than to talk to men about God.*”

[1] Brace for impact – vv. 1-5

First, Habakkuk declared his readiness to listen, and be changed in the process (v.1). Here is the resolve and resilience of Habakkuk – “I will” (two times in 2:1; echoed twice in 3:18). In the balance of this chapter we discover God’s answer – which is a “severe mercy”. C. S. Lewis wrote this to a grieving friend, suggesting the experience of loss as a way God could draw the bereaved closer through the process. In his book **The Problem of Pain**, C.S. Lewis writes, “*God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience but shouts in our pains: it is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world*” (91). [READ MORE](#)

Having been on watch to see what God would say, Habakkuk now recounted what is severe, yet merciful, for God’s purpose was to cleanse and correct His people. God’s severity is always purposeful! Verse 1 has another rendering: “*when I am reproved*” (NASB). Notice that God’s revelation was to be properly **documented** (v.2). Habakkuk was also called to embrace God’s revelation as fully **dependable** (v.3).

God painstakingly purifies and restores His chosen ones. In the middle of such an experience we must believe that God has good purposes at work, especially when it involves Babylonian attack (vv.4-5). Hence, Habakkuk’s question: “*how long must this go on?*” (v.6c). This is not far from our lives! What about your personal experience? Has God been sounding a message of “brace for impact” to you?

[2] Pinpoint the perils – vv. 6-19

Last Sunday we noted that Judah had internal and external challenges. We noted seven societal values which stand against Biblical values. In this part of chapter 2 there are five perils or “woes” highlighted in a “taunt song” (v.6a). It is directed at the soon-coming Babylonian invaders. Each of the five perils is presented as an indictment which can be considered in the context of a “sin of self”. Consider these perils:

self-confidence (vv.4-5)

selfishness (vv.6-11)

self-preservation (vv.12-14)

self-indulgence (vv.15-17)

self-reliance (vv.18-19).

The “proud” (NASB) stand in stark contrast to those who “live by faith” (v.4). Some place trust in deaf, inanimate idols (vv.18-19). In this “taunt song” the emphasis on such sins as greed, kidnapping, theft, extortion, looting, and murder! The punishment looming over Judah was severe indeed! Fascinatingly, this was at the same time a description of Judah’s punishers, and an indictment of God’s people. Like us, they were tempted to fall into the self-justification trap – “but I am not as bad as _____!”

Yes, so much of our activity is focused on self-preservation or self-promotion! Have you heard of “Project Habakkuk”? This was a British plan during WWII. The concept was to build a 600-meter-long aircraft carrier. But with what material? The experiment was to combine wood pulp and ice into a material called pykrete! It became cost prohibitive yet there was a prototype tested in Jasper National Park.

Does this seem like a foolish plan? Yet how often are followers of Jesus foolish in their attempts to satisfy or justify self!? Even in Christian service we can become idolatrous, indulgent, and self-reliant. As verse 18 tells us, “*It’s maker trusts in his own creation.*” In what are you trusting? Mark Batterson writes,

God’s dream for your life is so much bigger, so much better than breaking even. If you focus on not making mistakes, you won’t make a difference. You don’t overcome sin by focusing on *not* sinning. You need a dream that is bigger and better than the temptations you’re trying to overcome. You need a dream that doesn’t allow you to become spiritually sidetracked, a dream that demands your utmost for His highest. (*Chase The Lion*, Multnomah, 2016, 4)

[3] Seek the answer – v. 20

To read this chapter deeply and thoughtfully, one slams into a wall in the final verse! All the rebellion against God becomes ridiculous in light of God’s holiness! This answer makes clear our obligation to lean deeply into God. We know Habakkuk was resolved to hear from God – are we? Consider **Psalm 46:8-10!**

The first part of God’s “final answer” to a call to **repentance** and **reliance** (v.1). The second part is a call to **recognition** of who God is and significant **reverence** in light of His holiness (v.20). Like Habakkuk, we must reckon with God’s absolute otherness! In the phrase “*Let all the earth be silent before Him*” the term “silent” could be “hush”. Is your heart hushed before God? We are welcomed into the “hush” of God’s presence to experience peace and recognize His work in our hearts even if questions remain unanswered.

“We might not challenge God yet we challenge our conception of God.” And yet, if we will only allow God to reshape our thinking, “we are reduced to the biggest place in the universe – we are reduced to the presence of God.” (Gray Poehnelt “Habakkuk: A Defiant Faith” February 5, 2017, Emmanuel Christian Community)

How does this chapter contribute to our search for resolve and resilience? We must be consumed with God and His purposes. Do we get the picture of what God is trying to do in our lives? Think of what it means to live with a God-produced resolve! You may even want to explore some Biblical metaphors of the way in which God’s work in our lives appears harsh, but is helpful. Think about **refining metal** (Malachi 3:3-4; Isaiah 1:25-26); **making oil** (Exodus 27:20); or **creating pottery** (Jeremiah 18:6; II Timothy 2:21).

Conclusion – see *Digging Deeper*

God is a faithful Father, who purifies His children for His purposes. “*No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.*” (Hebrews 12:11). When a restoration project is undertaken, there is the pain in deconstruction that leads to better things! Let God develop resolve and resilience in you. From our “prayer for a new year” shared last week, listen to lines Keith Getty and Stuart Townend have written:

Speak, O Lord, and fulfill in us All Your purposes for Your glory
Teach us, Lord, full obedience, Holy reverence, true humility
Cause our faith to rise, cause our eyes to see Your majestic love and authority
Help us grasp the heights of Your plans for us, truths unchanged from the dawn of time
Speak, O Lord, 'til Your church is built and the earth is filled with Your glory

Please remember the assignment to suggest your one, key **shared values** that you hold for Cornerstone.