

Minor Prophet Series – Part 2

Habakkuk

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Introduction:

Good morning. We are in week two of a five-week sermon series on the minor prophets. And it's like Lester said last week, it's not that these books are less important. It's not minor prophets for the minor leagues. They have a major message. They just got it out faster.

Isaiah a rumbling 66 chapters. Jeremiah 52. Ezekiel 48. Obadiah 21 verses. Major message without being long winded—it's everything you dreamed of in a pastor, that you don't always get.

I'm excited. It's not every decade that we get to preach on Habakkuk. Some of you said, this is the first message I've ever heard in my life on Obadiah. This may be the last message you ever hear in your life on Habakkuk.

We love the minor prophets. Jesus loved these books. He would have poured himself over these very books. Saturated himself with the truths of these books. (He said, not a single stroke of a pen would cease. 100% USDA certified.) More than that, the Apostle Paul said, "this carries the very Spirit of God" which means the Spirit has a living word for us today.

Habakkuk brings his complaint. (was watching his culture erode into injustice, violence)

Habakkuk 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 paralyzed,
and justice never prevails.

The wicked hem in the righteous,
so that justice is perverted

2,500 years before our day he has already managed to ask that question: How could a just God allow injustice? – (Why does a good God allow suffering?) He's taking that question directly to God.

This morning I'm not giving you a nice tidy answer wrapped up in a bow. I want to give you something more meaningful than that. **God is giving you permission to wrestle with Him for your answers.** That's the point of this book—is the struggle of faith.

Some of us grew up in a tradition that says, don't ask questions. Don't complain. Don't push back. Don't get too excited. Don't challenge the leaders. Don't rock the boat. Follow the rules. Keep your head down and keep quiet. I want to delicately suggest that that's not freedom. That's a form of religious oppression. I'm skeptical of any religious denomination or system that doesn't allow dynamic dialogue. Dynamic exchange. Earnest questions in pursuit of truth. God doesn't want spectators, he wants whole hearted grapplers who wrestle Him for the truth. Habakkuk is bold enough to complain. And God is patient enough to answer.

God Answers Habakkuk

I'm taking care of it. "I'm sending the Babylonians." (use them to judge Israel)

[Habakkuk 1:6](#) effectively summarizes God's response.

[I am raising up the Babylonians,
that ruthless and impetuous people](#)

Habakkuk complains a second time.

[Habakkuk 1:12b-13](#)

[O Rock, you have ordained them to punish.](#)

[13 Your eyes are too pure to look on evil;
you cannot tolerate wrong.](#)

[Why then do you tolerate the treacherous?](#)

[Why are you silent while the wicked
swallow up those more righteous than themselves?](#)

"Are you kidding me? The Babylonians are more guilty than we are."

[Habakkuk 2:1](#)

[I will stand at my watch](#)

[and station myself on the ramparts;](#)

[I will look to see what he will say to me,](#)

[and what answer I am to give to this complaint.](#)

[He's tapping his foot at God. "God, I am waiting for an answer."](#)

Have you ever prayed and asked Jesus for an answer and you left more confused than before because sometimes he speaks in parables? Have you ever started praying into a situation, and it got worse?

Illustration: financial situation in Buffalo

Has God ever answered you, and you didn't like the answer He gave?

Story of the man who fell to the edge of the cliff: pg. 98

God—I thought you were the God of life. Why this death of a dear friend? I thought you were the God of healing. Why this disease? I thought you were the God of protection. Why this evil oppression on my family?

Faith isn't the absence of tension. Faith is wrestling with God over the things he says are true in the midst of the realities I'm facing. They are not matching up. "God, I don't understand." See it's when you're ready to let go that God wants you to Tango. It's when you hit the wall of your circumstance that God wants you to reach up wrestle with Him for it. God wants you to chase this thing.

Bartering Culture

- This is a passionate and bartering society. We live in an emotionally aloof transactional culture. I.e. Buying stuff online.
- The Middle East is a bartering culture. You get in each other's face. You smell the garlic on each other's breath. There's a haggling process.
- It's in the back and the forth that you engage and build relationship.
- That's exactly what Habakkuk is doing.

In Hebraic faith we have to be persistent enough to seek after an answer--God is patient enough to lead us in His ways. We have to be persistent enough to pursue the breakthrough. And God's faithfulness is enough to provide.

For some of you:

- Experiencing a deeply personal relationship with Father God
- Baptism of the Holy Spirit
- Healing
- Maybe that's here there are certain Bible verses that have taken me 15 years to understand.
- Interceding for that unsaved coworker that you love so dearly.

The mystery of Jacob. Jacob wrestled with God.

- He escaped one catastrophe. On the brink of another. He's on the edge of his promise.
- Wrestle – Aboq- to kick up the dust. To get dusty.
- Jabbok – emptying
- Jacob clings to this man and grapples, asks for the blessing to send him into his promise.
- Friend in High School who wrestled – there's something deeply personal about wrestling face to face.

- There's something we learn in the struggle. We meet God face to face. Learn about ourselves. The dreams and purposes he's placed in our hearts. Maybe it's an injustice you're facing.

This is my concern, and this is my appeal.

Concern: We are living in changing times where it has become easy to be a content consumer. God is a click away. And I rely on my pastor or somebody to give me 3-minute do-it-yourself videos on YouTube with 4 sequential steps.

And God is saying. I'll wrestle you for it. If you want to cross into the land of promise you're going to have to contend for it. There's something in the process of grappling with God and looking eyeball to eyeball with him that clarifies what you're really desperate and what's really important.

Lord responds to Habakkuk

Habakkuk 2:2-3a

"Write down the revelation
and make it plain on tablets
so that a herald may run with it.

3 For the revelation awaits an appointed time;
it speaks of the end
and will not prove false."

What was the answer God gives – "I'm going to discipline Babylon."

5 Woes--Stop signs.

v.6 Woe to him who piles up stolen goods

v.9 Woe to him who builds his realm by unjust gain

v.12 Woe to him who builds a city with bloodshed

v.15 Woe to him who gives drink to his neighbors till they are drunk,

v.19 Woe to him who says to wood, 'Come to life!' (idols)

God may not deal with injustice on your timeline, but He will deal with it.

Habakkuk 2:13 - Has not the LORD Almighty determined
that the people's labor is only fuel for the fire,
that the nations exhaust themselves for nothing?

Habakkuk 2:14 – This is great hope for mankind. The reversal of human depravity and evil. This is the world of the Messiah. --For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

You can't even comprehend how vast, and deep, and awesome those days will be. When Messiah reigns from Jerusalem over the nations he that has paid with his blood to transform into his image. When the sweetness and the heaviness of his presence pours down into every soul and says, "You are mine. And I am yours."

Can you even imagine one county (our country) that is so full of the goodness of the Lord, that Amish barns are filled with 24 hours of worship and prayer, and local prisons have sat empty for decades, neighborhoods are filled with laughter and lawn chairs, and carpenters and their work become artwork, and secretaries, fathers and mothers... local businesses... Every person finds employment that is inspirational, and meaningful, and the entertainment industry is so full of Godly creativity that Netflix actually makes movies that have hope and joy in them. And social media is so full of kindness that people stop unfriending each other...

The joy of his friendship, and the weightiness of his authority, and gentleness of his ways, and the creativity of his majesty, hangs like a beautiful fragrance over our county.

But gives a warning at the very beginning of his revelation.

In verse 3. "Though it linger, wait for it."

- "Wait" – to tie yourself to it.

What are we tying ourselves off to? What are we attached to?

But God says in 2:4 "The righteous will live by faith."

- Live as if what God has said is more real than what your eyes are telling you.
- Live as if the reality of tomorrow's kingdom were with me today.
- Live as if **God wants me not to passively wait for the promise, but to wrestle Him for it!**

Habakkuk 3:2 Great intercessors cry!

"Lord I have heard of your fame; (he recalls the stories of the past)

"I stand in awe of your deeds, O Lord (he worships God in the present)

"Renew them in our day" (he cries out in prayer for the future.)

That is wrestling faith!

Habakkuk 3:17-19

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.

19 The Sovereign LORD is my strength;
he makes my feet like the feet of a deer,
he enables me to go on the heights.

Ministry Prayer! (call to mind something you are contending for)

Renew your miracles!

Renew your great salvations!

Renew your victories over the enemy!

Renew the hope of our marriage!

Renew the dreams you put in my heart!

Renew the passion!

Renew the faith to stand