

How Long, O Lord – Part 2
Believe the Unbelievable – Hab. 1:5-11
Crosspoint – Dave Spooner – April 14th, 2024

Intro:

- In order to understand our passage for this morning, we must do a quick review of our passage from last week.
- Habakkuk, the prophet, is crying out to God for help and salvation based on his situation and circumstances. We read about his lament, a prayer of complaint, in the opening four verses of Habakkuk.

Hab 1:1-4 NIV

The prophecy that Habakkuk the prophet received.

2 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 wrongdoing? 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.

- Habakkuk is tired of calling out and crying out to God for His help without God responding. He questions why God makes him look at injustice and why He tolerates wrongdoing, destruction, violence, strife, and escalating conflict. He accuses God that because of His inactivity, His law is ineffective, justice does not win, and the wicked surround and are greater than the righteous, so that justice is perverted.
- Today, we see God’s response to this lament, complaint, and accusation from Habakkuk. Here is His response.

Hab 1:5-11 NIV

“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.

6 I am raising up the Babylonians, that ruthless and impetuous people, who sweep across the whole earth to seize dwellings not their own. 7 They are a feared and dreaded people; they are a law to themselves and promote their own honor.

8 Their horses are swifter than leopards, fiercer than wolves at dusk. Their cavalry gallops headlong; their horsemen come from afar. They fly like an eagle swooping to devour; 9 they all come intent on violence. Their hordes advance like a desert wind and gather prisoners like sand.

10 They mock kings and scoff at rulers. They laugh at all fortified cities; by building earthen ramps they capture them. 11 Then they sweep past like the wind and go on— guilty people, whose own strength is their god.”

- This is a point-by-point overlay of Habakkuk’s Lament and God’s response with the implication of both the prayer and response.

Habakkuk’s Lament (2-4)	God’s Response (5-11)	Implication
How Long, O Lord? You do not listen, You do not save (2).	I am going to do something in your days that you would not believe even if you were told. I am raising up the Babylonians (5).	You say I don't listen; I do listen, and now it is your turn to listen. I have been acting, and it will happen in your day.
You make me look at injustice (3).	Look to the nations and watch, be utterly amazed (5).	You need to look and see the bigger picture.
You tolerate wrongdoing, destruction, violence, strife, escalating conflict (3).	They are ruthless (6), impetuous (6), feared (7), dreaded (7), swift (8), fierce (8) and intent on violence (9). They sweep across the whole earth (6), seize dwellings not their own (6), and gather prisoners like sand (9).	I do not tolerate wrongdoing, and I will deal with it. Judgment is coming.
Your law is paralyzed (4).	They are a law to themselves. They promote their own honor (7).	I will discipline those who paralyze my law with people who are their own law. If you don't like my law, then they will be your law.
Justice never prevails (4).	They mock kings and scoff at rulers (10).	If you don't like my authority, then I will give you those who completely disregard authority.
The wicked hem in the righteous (4).	They laugh at all fortified cities, by building earthen ramps, they capture them (10).	The wicked surround the righteous; now, those who are wicked will be surrounded by a greater force.
Justice is perverted (4).	They are guilty, their own strength is their god (11).	If you don't want my justice, then I will give you their justice, where the guilty rule by brute strength.

Understand that God hears

- Through His Word, God has given us language for all types of prayers for all kinds of occasions, including lament and complaint. This is one of the primary reasons we have the (song) book of Psalms.
- When you call out to God, God hears, He sees, He knows. We pray to God because of our relationship with Him; communication is critical for any and every relationship. Our communication reflects and contains the relationship. God gives us access to Himself, which is the greatest of all gifts.

Eph 2:18-19 ESV

For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. 19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God

- Jesus is the one who gives us access in one Spirit (the Holy Spirit) to the Father. Because of Jesus and our being “in Him,” we are no longer “strangers and aliens” to God. But we are now fellow citizens with the saints, and we are now members of the household of God. And membership has its privileges.

1 Peter 3:10 ESV

For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer.

- God’s eyes are on us, and we are made righteous in Christ. The promise is that God both sees us and hears our prayers. This is a great and precious promise.
- When we pray, we build and express our relationship with God. God has ordained both the means and the ends to our prayers so that we will grow and He will be glorified.
- *Trust in God. Trust His timing. Trust that He hears you. Wait for Him in Faith.*

Understand that there is a bigger picture

- We are finite; God is infinite. We are limited in our power, knowledge, and understanding. God is unlimited in His power, knowledge, and understanding. So often we pray out of our limited understanding and distorted view. Trust that God is answering us from His unlimited view and omniscient understanding. He has your best in mind. Will you trust Him in and under all circumstances? Will you worship Him and give way to Him, conceding and trusting in His all-sufficiency and sovereignty?

Isa 55:8-9 ESV

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. 9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

- These things are indeed true about God. His thoughts and His ways are infinitely higher than ours. God’s perspective is heavenly, eternal, clear, unfiltered, and perfect, as are His thoughts.

Rom 8:28-29 NIV

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. 29 For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.

- This is easy to believe and helpful to remember when things are going well, however, this is difficult to believe and critical to remember in difficulty. Knowing God's ultimate goal helps us understand what He is doing. His goal is to "conform us to the image of His Son," which is a process that sometimes requires pressure and difficulty.
- *Trust in God. Trust His heart. Trust His knowledge. Trust His Process. Wait for Him in Faith.*

Understand that God will deal with sin

- There are four primary ways God deals with sin.
- *Number one, God deals with sin by inviting us to repent* (Matt 3:8-9, Luke 5:32, Rom 2:4-5, 2 Cor 7:10-11, John 16:8-11).

Matt 3:2 ESV

Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Acts 3:19-20 ESV

Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, 20 that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.

1 John 1:9 ESV

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

- *Number two, God at times deals with sin by using a greater evil to mitigate and correct a lesser evil.* This is most often the case in the Old Testament and is certainly the case with Habakkuk. Also, in the New Testament, Paul instructs the church in Corinth "**to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord**" (1 Cor 5:5 ESV). And again, Paul tells Timothy that he handed over Hymenaeus and Alexander to Satan so that they may learn not to blaspheme (See 1 Tim 1:20).
- *Number three, God deals with sin by "giving us over" to our sin.* The explanation of this is found in Romans 1:18-32. God turns people over to progressively greater sin. Three times in this passage (v. 24, 26, 28), God gives people over to greater and greater depths of sin based on early choice and participation in sin. One moves from toes in the water to drowning in a sea of sinfulness.
- *Number four, God deals with sin in the final judgment.* This is all over the Bible. (Matt. 25, John 3:36, Rom. 12:19, Eph 5:6-7, Col 3:6, Rev. 6:17, Rev. 19:15-16)

2 Cor 5:10 ESV

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

- This is the reality of everyone alive, despite their beliefs. This is the final and most important "review" of our lives. What we do on earth does matter, both now and for eternity.

Heb 10:28-31 ESV

Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. 29 How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? 30 For we know him who said, “Vengeance is mine; I will repay.” And again, “The Lord will judge his people.” 31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

- The Bible warns us of this harsh reality for those who reject Christ and His offer of Himself in our place against the wrath of God. Those who reject Christ must pay their own penalty for their sin. God will hold all to account. With this in mind, we are responsible for sharing the good news in Jesus, as it contrasts with the bad news of our sins.
- *Trust in God. Trust His Judgement. Wait for Him in Faith.*

Testimony – Bob Carlson

Conclusion

- In your crying out to God in lament, understand that God hears you, understand that there is a bigger picture, and understand that God will deal with sin. Trust in God, wait for Him in faith.
- Find your hope in Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come (1 Thess 1:10 NIV).
- Invitation to receive Christ and prayer for salvation.

Benediction

Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, 21 equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen. (Heb 13:20-21 ESV)

Questions for Growth Groups

- How does knowing that God hears you empower your prayer life and give you confidence?
- How does knowing God’s attributes, especially His omniscience and sovereignty, help you to wait on Him?
- Which of the four ways given as to how God deals with sin, helps you in your Christian life?
- Have you hidden your life in Jesus? How does knowing He took the wrath of God for you affect your value of Him?