

## Week 6      **The Habakkuk Paradox: *The God who is consistently unpredictable***

The traditional Sunday school would say God never lets us down; God is utterly reliable; God is consistent; God is a rock we can rely on. But God constantly surprises his people. He doesn't do what we expect, and he often does exactly what we would never anticipate.

### **How do we trust in a God who seems to constantly confound our expectations?**

The book of Habakkuk is a conversation (possibly a dispute) between Habakkuk and God. Habakkuk lives in the southern kingdom of Judah, after the Northern Kingdom of Israel had been taken by the Assyrians. Habakkuk complains that God allows evil to prevail, and justice is not effective:

*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.*

(Chapter 1 v 3-5)

- Evil often prevails, and life doesn't seem fair. Do we see injustice today?
- How do we equate this with a loving God in interacting with our lives?
- Wouldn't a caring God intervene in the conflicts around the world?

God's response initially sounds encouraging:

*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.*

(Chapter 1 v 5)

So God was about to deal with the evil in Judah, but he goes on:

*I am raising up the Babylonians,  
that ruthless and impetuous people.....*

(Chapter 1 v 6)

- **Would we expect God to use the most aggressive, unruly, greedy nation to deliver his justice?**
- **Do we see this action consistent with our understanding of our God of salvation?**

Habakkuk seemingly didn't, and he told God in his second complaint (Chapter 1 v 12-13):

*O LORD, are you not from everlasting?  
My God, my Holy One, we will not die.  
O LORD, you have appointed them to execute judgment;  
O Rock, you have ordained them to punish.*

*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?*

God replies (Chapter 2 v 2-3):

*"Write down the revelation  
and make it plain on tablets  
so that a herald may run with it.  
For the revelation awaits an appointed time;  
it speaks of the end  
and will not prove false.  
Though it linger, wait for it;  
it will certainly come and will not delay...."*

"The revelation awaits the appointed time", God is describing the long game. It is suggested that we can only see a single frame in the middle of an epic movie, which does not tell the whole story. "It will certainly come".

We should look at these situations in three contexts:

- **The future – seeing God's long term plan.**
- **The past – how God has responded through out the ages, revealing his character.**
- **The present – are we judging God based on whether he is delivering what we want.**

In Habakkuk's time God was going to deal with the evil in Judah, and subsequently deal with the Babylonians. This was not Habakkuk's solution, but it was God's answer to Habakkuk's complaints

- **Can we hope to see the long game?**
- **Can we trust the future to God?**
- **Does this help us in the trials of our lives?**

**Can we share Habakkuk's closing prayer throughout the ups and downs of life? (Chapter 3 v 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,  
yet I will rejoice in the LORD,  
I will be joyful in God my Savior.*

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

[P.S. Whilst away last week our speaker, talking about Abraham, ended on Hebrews Ch 11, and I was particularly struck by v 13 – "All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners on earth".]

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