

Yet

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Everybody. God is good. So we're getting back into the Homeward Bound series—because why not? Too easy to do.

But before that, I want to tell you about a man, a military officer. He was a Soviet military officer named Stanislav Petrov. And he's sitting alone in a bunker outside of Moscow. His job, his only job, is to monitor the early warning systems, the defense systems for the Soviet Union. If American missiles fly into the air, if they are inbound, his only job is to report it. You pick up the phone and you report it. And the system, the workflow, takes over from there. It's very turnkey.

And on September 26th, 1983, 12:15 in the morning, Petrov was sitting on another brisk day during the Cold War. And the alarm starts going off. He checks: one missile is inbound from the United States. Two missiles are in the air. Three missiles, four, five missiles are in the air, inbound. And the system is confident it's doing what it's built to do. The alarm is screaming. Every protocol he has ever trained for and followed says the same thing. You pick up the phone and you report it, and the counterattack begins. That's how it works. That's what the system was for. If someone is going to try to launch the end of the world, we will make sure it happens. And unfortunately, we both have that same strategy.

He has 5 minutes to make a decision—to pick up the phone. And he sits. He stares at the screen. But something feels wrong. Something's not adding up. He doesn't know what it is. He just knows that if America is going to start a nuclear war, they're not going to send five missiles. They're going to send 500. That's how you start it.

He picks up the phone and he reports a system malfunction in the system. Turns out he was right. It was a glitch in the system, a satellite glitch, something having to do with the sun reflecting off the clouds. We were that close to not being here.

He was not rewarded. He was actually reprimanded because he did not do his job. He did not properly document the incident and report it. With the evidence and the way the system worked. Pick up the phone. The system says five missiles. He was reprimanded.

He retired quietly, living alone in a small apartment outside of Moscow. His neighbors had no idea who he even was. The story didn't come out until 1998, and he did one interview. And he said he didn't feel like a hero, of course. He said that heroes are supposed to know what they're doing. He said he was just a guy who made a decision and got really lucky. And he died in 2017. His obituary ran in a few papers, but most people didn't notice. Most people don't know the story.

A Decision in the Bunker

And I want to talk about what happened in that bunker in those 5 minutes between the alarm going off and him picking up the phone. Because I would like to think it wasn't just luck. I think it was something else, and I think that a 7th century prophet named Habakkuk knew exactly what it was as well.

And so, as I mentioned, we're deep into the Homeward Bound series, where we examine a prophet every single week to explore the core message of that prophet, but also to look into who the prophet was on their own journey. What was the context? What was going on?

And we started the journey in Isaiah, who showed us the highway home. We wept in Jeremiah. We watched Ezekiel perform his ADHD-level street performances, prophetic outtakes in Babylon. Hosea married an unfaithful woman to show us what it feels like to God. Amos exposed how religion becomes the empire's chaplain. Jonah ran from grace because he'd rather die than see his enemies be forgiven. Micah hauled Israel into a divine courtroom. Nahum announced the end of the Assyrian terror on his people. Haggai told a discouraged post-exilic community to continue being strong—don't forget who you are. And Zechariah gave us eight visions in one night from God that showed him more active in the cosmos than anyone had ever seen on Earth.

Every prophet in the series opens with a word from Yahweh, a word from the Lord. Thus says the Lord. The burden of the Lord has come upon me. I saw the Lord seated on his throne. And that's the pattern.

Isaiah sees the seraphim, the creatures in heaven. Jeremiah gets a word before he's even born and later has a few resentment issues about that. Ezekiel watches the heavens crack open by a river in Babylon. Every single one of them, God speaks first. Yahweh speaks first. And then the prophet responds.

The Prophetic Pattern

Habakkuk opens with a complaint that he's bringing. There's no vision. There is no throne room. There's no commission. Just a man who has been waiting long enough and decided that he's done waiting. He's going to go first. He's seen a lot of stuff and he has expectations of the God that he worships, and he's not seeing them. And he formulates a complaint.

Habakkuk's one of those Bibles where you pick verses out of them. There are a few key verses from the New Testament that come together in what we'll discuss. It's not one of those books you run to read. I encourage you. Knock it out. It's like two and a half chapters. Super fast. Super quick. And it is a very special book in the scriptures.

A Man Who Couldn't Stay Silent

So let's jump in. The first complaint. This is how Habakkuk starts. And it's in chapter 1, verses 2 through 4. And it states:

"O Lord, how long shall I cry for help and you will not hear or cry to you violence and you will not save. Why do you make me see iniquity and why do you ideally look at wrong? Destruction and violence are before me, strife and contention arise. So the law, the Torah, is paralyzed and justice never goes forth. For the wicked surround the righteous, so justice goes forth perverted."

That is not a very gentle inquiry of God, right? This is accumulated. This is bubbling up within him. This is an unanswered prayer finally breaking the surface.

The Hebrew verb for crying out here is someone who cries out for help and they hear nothing back. Multiple times. He's not just having a bad week, in other words. It's not just, "Oh, I'm having big emotions." No, he's a man who's been holding something for a long time, and he can't be quiet about it anymore.

And notice what he's complaining about. He's not complaining about anything in his own life. He's not asking God to fix his circumstances. He's not praying for his health. He's not praying for his finances or his relationships. He's complaining about the moral order of the world that God claims to be sovereign over. Torah is paralyzed. Your law is paralyzed. The powerful preying on the vulnerable and weak. Justice running through the system and coming out the other end looking nothing like justice. Structures that were supposed to protect people failing. And God, who gave the Torah, who promised to uphold it, who baked justice into the covenant, is watching all of it. And is he doing nothing?

That's a bigger complaint than probably most of us have ever brought to God. Most of us pray about our lives. Habakkuk is praying about the world existentially.

Accumulated Anguish

He's what you would get when someone takes the prophetic imagination seriously enough to actually bring it to God and kind of demand an account or clarification. And I think that's so awesome. That something so uncomfortable is in our Bible. The complaint is in the canon. It got preserved. It got included. This complaint is scripture—the word of God.

Habakkuk didn't get rebuked for lack of faith when he made the complaint. He didn't get a lecture about speaking life over the situation or not agreeing. His raw, honest "Where are you?" prayer that arrives in the Bible here was something that just came from his heart. It's very, very intentional. And I think that means something significant for those of us who value the Bible for what it is.

The Weight of the World

Because it seems that we tend to build a subculture in the church, broadly, around performance of spiritual confidence. Bring your best to God—only, always, in prayer or in church. Declare victory always. Don't speak negative things. Sugarcoat it always. You see this a lot. And it either develops someone who is an on-fire prayer warrior, or it develops a generation of people that carry enormous grief and honest questions who have learned that they can never really let those questions out. They have to hide them from God.

Of all people, of all things—I like to think that's the reason when we look at prophets and scholars like Walter Brueggemann. A great Old Testament scholar, he coins this term called the prophetic imagination. And one way to look at it is essentially how God spoke through different people and their imagination is the conduit that connects their relationship with God to the physical world—how that output came forth and how it looks different with all the prophets. Daniel looks a lot different than Ezekiel. Isaiah looks a lot different than Malachi, right?

Jonah—what? The lesson for Jonah is his disobedience. And so I appreciate the diversity of how the Bible comes together through the imagination and the eyes, through the souls of a diverse group of people—because it shows a very diverse God and it shows a God that's a lot bigger than a God that sometimes we want him to be.

A God Bigger Than We Imagine

And so it's significant when we look at the Bible and we realize that there are a lot of ups in the Bible, but there's a lot of downs, and it doesn't shy away from acknowledging that. It doesn't shy

away from sometimes feeling hopeless, sometimes feeling doubt, sometimes getting upset when your expectations of God don't occur in reality—no matter how hard you prayed or whatever all the things that you did or how much faith you stood by.

We're Not Alone: Wrestling With God

Sometimes I get frustrated because I'm not God and deep down I want to be God because I would do things a certain way. Thank goodness. But we're not alone. 40% of the Psalms are lament Psalms, grief in the face of God's awesomeness, questions. God, why is this happening? This is so hard. Job is lament beginning to end. Long-winded. And God calls Job more accurate than Job's friends who spent the entire book defending God. Jeremiah is full of unfiltered complaints that would make a lot of contemporary worship teams deeply disturbed. Very uncomfortable to see the reality of Jeremiah and his tension with serving God and also feeling forced at times.

The prophetic tradition doesn't assume that honest wrestling is the same as a failure of faith. That's the point. Jacob got a blessing because he chose to wrestle God. He walked away limping. There's a cost. But that's how he produced the blessing, the big blessing. Wrestling, having questions, doubt—that's a sign of faith. That's a sign of the journey. And that's not me, so this is the Bible. This is the story.

Habakkuk Brings His Complaint

Habakkuk brings this all to life, and he brings this complaint to God, and God shows up. God answers. And he answers in verse 5. He states: "Look among the nations and see. Wonder and be astounded, for I am doing a work in your days that you would not believe if you were even told. For behold, I am raising up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, the Babylonians, who march through the breadth of the earth to seize dwellings not their own."

So the Chaldeans, Babylonians, they are the most violent empire on the ancient Near Eastern map right now. The people who would eventually sack Jerusalem, destroy the temple, burn it to the ground, and drag Judah into exile. Their military reputation was built on deliberate brutality. Terror as their warfare. They were the empire every smaller nation in the region was afraid of. The kind of empire that like destroys people and then just holds that up as a trophy of how great they are because of their willingness to use force and violence.

And God is raising them up. The instrument of correction for a nation that Habakkuk was complaining about. They were used to come against Israel that had stopped keeping the Torah.

And he's sending a nation that doesn't even know Torah exists as the correction. Yahweh is using the most violent pagan empire in the region to address violence inside of his own covenant people.

For a faithful Israelite in the 7th century, this would have sounded like Yahweh is saying the answer to the problem in your house is that I'm just going to burn it down. That's the equivalent. I've got a lot of spots in these walls and I really need to repaint it and patch it. Well, it's okay. I'm sending in a bulldozer. It's not a comfortable answer is the point. It's not the answer that Habakkuk was praying for. No, I want you to help, and then everyone would be happy and nice and good to people. Instead, bulldozer. It's the kind of answer that makes you wish you didn't ask.

Habakkuk's Second Complaint

So, Habakkuk forms a complaint against the God of creation. And God answers back with an answer that is not satisfactory. So, what do you think Habakkuk does? I mean, surely at this point he recognizes that he needs to show some respect or be humble and just end the letter. No. Habakkuk pens another complaint. This is what makes the Bible so amazing is when you can actually see the drama behind it. It's not meant to be just security camera footage. It was meant to infuse drama and emotion and curiosity for you to be like, "Well, there's another complaint? What's he going to say now?"

You who are pure 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?

The second complaint, if you've noticed, is quite more sophisticated than the first. See, the first complaint is asking God, "Where are you?" The second complaint is now pressing on God's character itself. God is holy. God, you cannot look at evil. So, how does a holy God use Babylon as his instrument? They worship their own military capacity. They attribute their success to their own strength and call it divine. They have no category for covenant like we do, for Torah, for the distinction between the right and the wrong that at least Judah has.

Pressing on God's Character

If Yahweh is deploying a pagan empire as his instrument of judgment, how is that any different from what every other nation in the ancient Near East says when they go to war? Every empire claimed that their gods were the ones that built the conquest. Babylon said Marduk was the one that was leading their armies. Assyria said Asher was their God leading their campaigns. What

makes God different from one more divinely sponsored agent of imperial violence? I can't believe this is in the Bible.

So, Habakkuk pushes all the way to the end of the chapter. He keeps going. And he says: "They catch men with hooks. They drag them out of their net and they gather them in their dragnet. Therefore, they sacrifice to their net and burnt offerings to their dragnet. For by them, they live in luxury and their food is rich. Shall they keep on emptying their net and mercilessly killing nations forever?"

He has a problem with God's answer. That's not a good answer for how you're going to solve the problem. That's what he says. Babylon worships its own power. It credits success to itself. And Habakkuk says, "How long is God going to allow this?" He's not even talking about Judah anymore. Now he's talking about Babylon.

The Watchman's Posture

And again, depending on your upbringing and church tradition, this almost feels like rebellion. Like the prophet's being rebellious, mutiny, talking back. I would put forth it's not rebellion as much as it's a man pressing hard in the character of God because he actually believes God has character worth pressing on. And he's not walking away. Habakkuk is staying in the conversation and demanding some kind of explanation or clarification. That's not the same as faithlessness. That's the kind of faith that takes the character of God serious enough to hold it up against evidence and ask if you're confused about it.

And then what he does is something remarkable at the beginning of chapter two. He says: "I will take my stand at the watch post as a watchman and station myself on the tower and look out to see what he will say to me and what I will answer concerning my complaint."

I'm going to be a watchman and I'm going to wait for you to respond. A watchman's job in the ancient world was to stand at the wall and scan the horizon. You got to watch. Active, postured. You're responsible for what you see. If something was coming and he missed it, that was on him. He's a watchman. The community depended on him watching, right?

That's the posture Habakkuk takes toward Yahweh. I have a complaint and I have a question and I'm not moving until I get an answer. He plants himself. He stations himself. He's not going anywhere. Not passive, not resigned. He's just very expectant of what God is going to do next. Someone who is absolutely certain the answer is coming and intends to be in a position to receive it when it arrives. Some of you look like you've never read a prophet like this. That's a distinction here, I think, that we sometimes lose when we talk about faith and what faith is.

Doubt Is Not Cynicism

Doubt says, "I don't understand something." I have questions I can't answer, not fully. But I'm still in the room and I still think there's an answer worth waiting for. I'm staying at my post. I'm not moving. Cynicism says that there's no answer coming and you need to stop caring. Yeah, there's a difference now, right? You can see it clearly. I'm leaving, right? Oh, I figured it out.

Habakkuk is one of the most stubborn, demanding, persistent prayers in the Bible. He asked a really hard question. And he got an even harder answer. And he pressed back even harder still. I am not letting go of you, angel. Give me a blessing. And now he plants himself and he waits. That's not someone who's giving up. That's not someone who has weak faith. That's someone who refuses to give up because of the strength and measure of their faith.

The Vision Awaits Its Appointed Time

And God responds. God responds in chapter 2 starting in verse 2. He says: "Write the vision. Make it on plain tablets. So he may run who reads it. For still the vision awaits its appointed time. It hastens till the end. It will not lie. If it seems slow, wait for it. It will surely come. It will not delay."

So, the language God uses about the appointed time matters. God isn't saying the vision is slow because he's inattentive. He's saying there's a time and that time will come. And the gap between promise and the fulfillment isn't evidence of failure. It's the space where faithfulness gets formed. You can't practice faith, emunah. You can't practice that when there's no delay. You can only practice faith in waiting.

Two Kinds of People

Verse four: "Behold, his soul is puffed up. It is not upright with him. But the righteous shall live by his faith."

So, there's two kinds of people here in verse four. The puffed up ones who trust their own power and their own perception. Babylon is that portrait. Babylon doesn't wait on anyone. Babylon's God is its own military capacity. The puffed up soul doesn't have a label or a category for waiting because there's no category for that dependence on God. And the second group of people are the righteous who live by faith.

And again, that word faith in Hebrew is emunah. Emunah. And emunah carries something broader than what we usually think of when we say faith. The version of faith we inherited in

the West, I guess you could say, is primarily a cognitive category. Believing the right things, right?

Forming and finding yourself in the correct positions within the opinions feeling certain is something that we're taught is a synonym for faith, certainty. That is not true. The opposite of faith in that framework is naturally doubt, meaning intellectual uncertainty. Emunah is not about cognition. The root is aman, amen. So we get amen. And amen doesn't mean I believe this intellectually. Amen means this is solid. Yeah, this is it. This is reliable. This is what you can stand on. It has structural integrity. It's the same root that describes a nursing mother's arms when she's holding an infant, like [Numbers 11](#). Not arms that feel confident about holding, arms that hold. The same word appears when Moses holds up his staff during the battle with Amalek. Israel is winning while the staff is raised and losing when his arms drop. And so Joshua and Hur find a stone for him to sit on, and they stand on either side lifting his arms up in [Exodus 17](#). They are practicing emunah on behalf of their leader holding the position refusing to let the arms drop. Emunah is not about the feeling that's in your chest when you get excited sometimes. It's about the posture of your life. Showing up to the watchtower when you have no answer. Staying at the post when the vision seems rather slow, then I would do it. Holding your arms up not because you feel strong, but because the battle depends on someone holding them.

Reading Yourself Into the Text

Around the 2nd century BC, a Jewish community went out into the Judean wilderness and settled there near the Dead Sea. And they believed every generation has a group, right? They believed that they were the faithful remnant living in the last days before God's great and final judgment. And so they went out and they found a little commune and they did all the prep stuff and it's legit, it's pretty neat to see. They copied the Hebrew scriptures onto scrolls and they wrote line by line commentaries in the prophets. And reading every single verse as if it was directly speaking to them in this moment in time. Their enemies were the enemies in the scripture, the teacher, so on and so forth. And one of those documents is called the Peshar Habakkuk. And it's verse by verse commentary of the prophet Habakkuk. When they reached chapter 2 verse, these four words about the righteous living by Emunah, faith—here's what they wrote: "This refers to all those who observe the law in the house of Judah, whom God will deliver from the house of judgment because of their suffering and their faith in the teacher of righteousness." That's their lingo for them. They read themselves directly into the text. Their community, their enemies, their teacher, a 7th century prophet speaking into their present

reality. And that interpretive move is something that we kind of pick up on and we vibe with at Passover. All right, the called over door. In every generation, a person should act as if they were the ones that came out of Egypt, right? Same type of thing. Paul does it too.

The Weight of Four Words

In Romans chapter 1 verse 17, the foundational argument of the most theological dense letter in the New Testament. The gospel reveals the righteousness of God from faith to faith and then he quotes [Habakkuk 2:4](#). The righteous shall live by faith, four Hebrew words from a minor prophet written six centuries before Yeshua. Carrying the weight of Paul's argument. [Galatians 3](#) completely different argument. No one is justified before God by the law. The Torah was never designed to be the mechanism of righteousness. And he quotes [Habakkuk 2:4](#) again, the same four words, different argument, load bearing though. [Hebrews 10](#) building toward chapter 11 in the Hall of Fame. The great cloud of witnesses and right before he gets there, he quotes [Habakkuk 2:3-4](#). My righteous one shall live by faith. Three authors three arguments, all based on these verses. All from a man who stood at his post and refused to leave until he got an answer. And then God gives an answer. And here is where you start to kind of see how the book is structured.

Habakkuk's Complaints and God's Answers

So Habakkuk complained about injustice in Judah. Everybody still following me? It's a little bit of a dense topic, I know, but hopefully it's exciting, hopefully it's new or you've never seen the book in this light and you'll go home and get excited and jump back in. Habakkuk's complaint was of course the injustice he saw in Judah. Like, your people, your city, your all this stuff is doing all these bad things and it's not getting better, so I was just wanted to bring it to your attention, sir. If you could do something about it. All right, I'll bring the bulldozer in. Mm, okay. Thank you for the prompt response. How is that anything different than the rest? So he complained about the injustice in Judah. God said, "Babylon is coming. I got it covered." Habakkuk pushed back and said, "Babylon is worse than us. How does that even work? Like, why would you even go there?" And God answers the second complaint with this. "You know what? You're right." Let's see. So God says, "You're right. But watch what I do to Babylon." I didn't finish the story. I didn't finish the answer. Since you keep on coming, watch this. So in [Habakkuk 2](#) God then lists the five woe oracles.

The Five Woe Oracles

Everybody say, "Woe." It's not the same woe. This woe is woe. Okay? Woe. Woe unto you. Not happy. The five woe oracles of Habakkuk are systematically dismantling the entire ideology of the Babylonian empire. And since you're feeling nerdy, we can go through them real quick. Woe to the one who heaps up what is not his own in chapter 2 verse 6. The accumulation of wealth through conquest and tribute and the extraction of resources through slaves, people that you have oppressed. God is saying the creditors are coming, the debt collectors are coming. Woe to the one who builds his house by unjust gain in verse 9. The great building programs, the monuments, the hanging gardens of Babylon, always creating new buildings everywhere. All of it built on the labor of people who had no choice. God says the very stones will cry out from that wall. Woe to the one who founds a city on bloodshed verse 12. The nations labor for nothing. The peoples exhaust themselves for fire. All that effort, all that violence, all that accumulated power. The earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of God as the waters cover the seas. That's part of God's response in verse 14. That's the counter vision to everything that Babylon is. Woe to the one in verse 15 who makes his neighbor drink. Causes humiliation. Manipulation, control. Imagine if you can get someone and we don't know anything about this in America—all the celebrities and politicians. So you put someone in an embarrassing situation that is so humiliating that it would destroy them if it ever got out. And then you just keep the record of it. So that you can ask him for a favor. You can ask him to come hang out with you more. You can ask him to keep doing things for you. This is what God says Babylon does. Shame and vulnerability deployed as tools of control. The fifth woe, woe to the one who says to a piece of wood, "Wake up." Who says to a silent stone, "Arise." Can it give guidance? No, it's overlaid with silver and gold. And there was no breath at all inside of it. 2:19 The absurdity of an empire whose divine justification comes from objects they themselves manufacture. The nations have built their entire metaphysical world view of how their gods work on things that they made with their hands. And then in chapter 2 verse 20, we have the one sentence answer to all of the conversation. And in one regard it might be underwhelming, but in the other is firm.

Yahweh Sitting in His Temple

But the Lord is in his holy temple. Let all the earth keep silent before him. 20 verses of indicting the most powerful empire in the world. 20 verses of woes and counter visions and the promise that the earth will be filled with God's glory. And then in one sentence, Yahweh is in his temple. That is a claim about the structure of reality. Every empire that has ever called itself eternal is a footnote in history. Every system that has ever claimed divine sanction for its violence is temporal. The empires rise, they make noise about their permanence, and how awesome they

are, and all the good things they bring, and God isn't moved from his temple. He's still sitting on his throne. Habakkuk came to the watchtower with two complaints, and he got two answers. The first was harder than the question. The second was the indictment of the whole thing that produced the first.

Singing the Questions Together

And what he does with all of this is in the last chapter. The book ends with a psalm, a superscription, a selah, liturgical poetry that's used in temple worship. Which means that this whole conversation, as up and down as it is, as confusing as it is, as kind of weird as it is, gives me vibes on many different levels. All of it ended up on the congregational song list in the temple. This is a strange people. Strange people. The complaint, the harder answer, the second complaint, the watchtower, the vision, the woe oracles, all of it ended up in the congregational song list. The community decided that Habakkuk's honest wrestling with God over the justice of the world was worth singing about. Together. Because it wasn't just his complaint. It was everybody's complaint. When everybody felt like they were living in hell. And singing it together was how they held it. Those questions.

The God of the Exodus

Habakkuk calls up the God of the Exodus. Yahweh marching from Teman to Paran. The same geography as the Sinai procession in [Deuteronomy 33](#). He's invoking the warrior God who showed up in Egypt and crushed the empire that held his people. Plagues going before him. Pestilence following. Mountains shaking. The deep lifting up. The sun and moon standing still. Yahweh striding through the earth with fury.

The God at the Watchtower

That's what he wanted in [Habakkuk 3:3-15](#). It's his claim. God, where is the God that I know from Exodus? The warrior God. And then Habakkuk says in verse 16 in chapter 3. Do I have it up here? I heard and my heart trembled. My lips quivered at the sound. Rottenness entered into my bones. My legs trembled beneath me. The vision of God in full combat posture doesn't produce triumphalism in the prophet's eyes, but holy trembling. In other words, he finds himself no longer cheering from a safe distance when he starts to crack that nut. He's undone by what he sees. The God he complained to, the God he pushed back against, the God he pressed so hard on the character of is more than he bargained for. Habakkuk is undone in possibly the best way possible when he starts to see that force be aroused.

Yet I Will Rejoice

And then he lands here in verse 17 through 19. Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail, and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold, and there be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will take joy in the God of my salvation. God the Lord is my strength. He makes my feet like the deer's. He makes me tread on my high places. The fig tree did not bud. He says that plainly. He doesn't spiritualize it. He doesn't say the fig tree of my heart is beginning to blossom. No, the actual fig tree, the actual vines, the actual olive harvest, the actual flocks, the actual fields, all of it's gone. Every visible tangible agricultural indicator of whether life is going well, all of it is a disaster when he looks outside. Yet I will rejoice in the Lord. Vaani—and I, given everything I just listed, given that none of it has changed—I will not resign. Not someone making peace with disappointment, by the way. He's being defiant. A declaration made against the evidence by someone who stood at the watchtower, received an answer harder than the question, pressed back, received a harder answer still, watched the circumstances remain unchanged and decided at the end that the character of God is more reliable than anything that I can see visibly out in the world.

And I believe why the biblical authors and the tradition of the ancient Israelites cherished this conversation so much is because that's what faith really is. This is what faith feels like and looks like when you're actually holding it. The arms that hold the infant when they're tired, the arms held by people standing on either side. Staying at the post even when the vision seems slow. Habakkuk doesn't end the book with the fig tree blood budding happy endings. It doesn't end with restoration. It doesn't end with the circumstances changing. It ends with the prophet himself changing. The fig tree still bare. The vines are still empty. Flocks are gone. All of it the same. But the prophet is the one who is different. He's been to the watchtower. He's pressed on the character of God and God pressed back. He received answers that satisfied neither his curiosity nor his comfort. But satisfied something deeper. And on the other side of that conversation, he stands in front of the same bare fig tree and says something completely different than he would have said at the very beginning of the book. And that's the structure. That's what the complaint arc is actually producing when we follow it. Not changed circumstances, but changed capacity to stand in unchanged circumstances.

Forming a People Who Can Hold the Present

The prophets are not primarily predicting the future, if you guys haven't guessed. They're forming a people who can hold the present with a different kind of posture. To see the empire as

temporary when the empire calls itself big and bad and eternal. To see God as active when the circumstances argue for absence. To say, "Yet I will rejoice when everything visible says there's nothing left to rejoice about." The prophets form you into someone that sees differently, who can stand when everything visible says sit down. And this prophet is the clearest picture in the entire prophetic corpus, I would say. Because you can watch it happen real time in his journey. He starts at the beginning of the book with the cry that hears nothing back. And he ends with the ani. And I yet will stand. The same man, same fig tree, completely different declaration.

The Prophet Who Understood Something Different

Bring the complaint. Bring the lament. Bring the frustration. There is 40% of the Bible that encourages you to believe and have faith that the God that you worship is not going to be offended and become unhinged because you're frustrated in your itty-bitty human. What? Who do you think you are? That you think that your complaint is going to make the God who is everywhere and does all things and is all powerful—will that be the thing that unhinges the God of the universe to become so upset? God does not have issues of insecurity like we do. The authors of the Bible want you to know and have preserved this so that you know what faith feels like. You know what it's like to wrestle for the blessing. You know what it's like to build a type of resilience that when you don't know what to do, when you don't have all the answers, you don't have to lie to yourself and say, "Yes, I do." But you also don't have to run away. You can stand and see what faithfulness looks like in the wait.

Officer Petrov made the call. He reported a malfunction and he went home. And the world kept going. And nobody thanked him because nobody knew. Years later in an interview, he was asked again what it felt like in those five minutes between when the alarm went off and picking up the phone. And he said he just knew what the screen was showing him did not match what he understood to be true about how the world worked. And he trusted that over the alarm. I am so grateful for Officer Petrov. Years later, it's how long it took to come out. And that thing right there, he trusted that over the alarm. That's the whole thing. That's it, right? That's it. He trusted what he understood to be true and how the world worked over what the alarm was telling him. What the TV was screaming at him. What his job was screaming at him. What his friends were screaming at him. What the news was telling him. No, this, that's not how. No, I know something else to be true.

Standing in the Silence

Habakkuk did the same thing. The alarm was screaming. Babylon was coming. The circumstances were making very loud noise and a very, very, very compelling case that God had either lost control or stopped caring. And Habakkuk planted himself at the post and said, "I'm not moving until I hear something different." About the character of his God that he claimed to worship, over what the circumstances were telling him, over what the fig tree was doing or the vines were doing or the cattle were doing. He starts the book with the cry that hears nothing back and he ends with the ani, and I, yet will stand. The fig tree is your average weekday. Is what it is. Yet I will rejoice. That's not a feeling. It's a declaration of faith. It's emunah. Steady, loyal faithfulness in the wait. Holding the position because of what God said at the watchtower and not because of what the world looks like and the circumstances look like. The righteous shall live by faith. Why? Because Yahweh is in his holy temple. Let all the earth be silent before him.

The Edification of the Prophets

So please stand as we conclude. And again, that's a lot in that itty-bitty book. And I encourage you to go home and read two and a half chapters or so. It's not everyone's favorite book. But it's edifying. At some point in your life it will be what you need to hear and that's why it's here.

An Invitation to Prayer

If you need prayer today for any reason, anything going on guys, we have prayer warriors at either side of the stage. I invite you to take advantage of that during worship. You can stay in your seat, you can pray, you can worship, you can meditate on the word. If you have something you'd like to bring down to the altar and set here and leave here today, it's appropriate to do that as well. That's what type of environment and atmosphere this is because that's the kind of God that we serve. Avinu Malkeinu, our Father and our King.

A Prayer of Faithfulness

Father, we thank you for the opportunity to come before you to tackle one of the harder prophets in your word. We thank you for the advanced lessons, for the teachings that you put in there that are hard to swallow, hard to chew. But Father, we thank you for the encouragement of what faithfulness looks like, what strength looks like. We thank you for the encouragement to view you as a good, good Father that is not insecure over our doubts or over our frustrations or over our expectations not being met. Father, I ask in the name of Yeshua that the Holy Spirit that is within us now would allow us to have the ability to overcome our own insecurities when

it comes to our relationship with you. That we would see you as big as you are and not as small as we would like to make you. That you would meet us at the watchtower and teach us faithfulness. In the name of Yeshua we pray. Amen.

Worship Response

In the glory of your presence I find rest for my soul. In the depths of your love I find peace, makes me whole. I love, I love. I love your presence. I love, I love. I love you, Yeshua. Oh. In the glory, glory of your presence, in the depth of your love, I love, I love your presence. If you want it, come and get it right now, love. This love that he has given you never ends now. Take over your heart, take over your head, feel it now. Feel it, want it, come crying out loud. The love that he has with all your heart, with all your head, feeling it now.

Closing Blessing

With all your heart with all your head, feeling it now. Oh, let it go. Your presence. Oh, we love Your presence.

Hear, oh Israel, the Lord is our God. The Lord is one. And blessed is the name of his glorious kingdom for all eternity. And may the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. May the Lord lift up his countenance toward you and give you his peace. In the name of our Sar Shalom, our prince of peace, Yeshua Hamashiach, we pray. Amen and amen. Shabbat Shalom, family.

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