



*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...
Habakkuk 3:16-18*

GOD IS ENOUGH
FAITH FAMILY LETTER—APRIL 1, 2020

Good evening,

As I begin writing this week's letter, I am wondering how all of you are doing. It is a new challenge for me, to communicate about such serious matters without being able to look you in the eyes and see how you might be reacting. My hope is to convey that you are important to me. Along with that, I desire to be a friend who offers ongoing spiritual support and encouragement as we live through a season of tremendous uncertainty and confusion. We are facing serious challenges and I don't want to offer glib, shallow, clichés. I don't want to make light of the circumstances we are all experiencing. This isn't easy. Still, we are a family of faith! That's more than a name that we put on a building. Faith is part of our DNA as believers. As I write to you tonight, my primary goal is to build us all up in the faith.

Last week I mentioned that the questions we are asking right now have been asked throughout human history in times of distress. What is happening? Why God? How long Lord? You can find those questions from people who loved God in the stories of the Bible. While it wouldn't be accurate to say they've all been seeking answers from God, it does seem that all of humanity has been asking some form of those same questions. It began with, "what is coronavirus?" Then it progressed to, "why are we being told to isolate and how long will this last?" This week, as I've listened to the news and watched press conferences, there seems to be a focus on how bad things are going to get. Now that there has been some time to study the spread of the disease, models are being constructed that hypothesize the number of people around the county that will be infected and worse. At the most basic level the related questions are:

1. How bad can this get?
2. What if the worst happens?

My guess is that we are all asking those questions in some way. “What if” questions can wreak havoc on us emotionally, psychologically and spiritually. Prolonged stress that comes with that can cause great harm to us physically as well. What if I lose my job? What if I can’t make the mortgage payment? What if I can’t buy groceries for my family? What if I get sick? What if the worst happens?

Let’s be honest. To some extent there is wisdom in asking all of those questions. Asking ourselves those questions is essential to coming up with practical solutions, or a plan of action, enabling us to adapt when trouble comes. There’s nothing wrong with those questions. It is not healthy or helpful to anyone to bury our heads in the sand and pretend to be unaware when trouble is all around us. If we are alert and aware of what is happening, we will ask ourselves many “what if” questions along the way. Yet, as I mentioned those questions can wreak havoc on us.

I want to point you to a song from the Old Testament book of Habakkuk. It comes from chapter 3 and it is a song of praise from a prophet who was aware of some tragic things that were about to take place. I won’t give you the full back story but this book comes from a dark time in the history of Israel. Habakkuk cried out to God with questions. He didn’t understand why God was allowing all of these tragic things to occur. Ultimately the book of Habakkuk is a story of faith, total faith in God.

Let’s take a look at the song at the end of Habakkuk chapter 3 and see where faith ultimately leads us.

¹⁷ 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,
¹⁸ yet I will rejoice in the LORD;
I will take joy in the God of my salvation.
¹⁹ GOD, the Lord, is my strength;

This is pretty simple. Yet it is profound. Imagine you live in an agrarian culture and you depend on crops and livestock to survive. You see that trouble is coming and it is going to be bad. You start asking yourself these questions:

1. What if our crops fail?
2. What if the fields do no produce anything for us to eat?
3. What if our herds die?

At some point, prior to writing this song, Habakkuk had seen what was on the horizon and asked all of these questions. He had to consider “what if the worst happens?”

Now look again at the song

Though, or ***even if***, the fig tree won’t blossom

Though, or ***even if***, there is no fruit

Though, or even if, our crops fail and there is no food

Though, or even if, our herds are dead and gone

I will rejoice in the Lord!

I will take joy in the God of my salvation!

God, the Lord, is my strength!

Please see what has happened here. Habakkuk did not ignore reality. He didn't bury his head in the sand. He asked real questions about real problems. He assessed what might come and considered "what if the worst happens?" Those questions did not overwhelm him because of faith in God that informed him that God is enough. Even if the worst may come, God is enough!

You see this kind of thinking throughout the Bible. Remember this story?

Daniel 3:17-18

¹⁷ If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from Your Majesty's hand. ¹⁸ But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up."

With their lives on the line they declared that even if you kill us, we serve God. God is enough.

The psalmist put it this way

Psalm 23:4

⁴ Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil,
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff,
they comfort me.

Throughout church history the end of Romans chapter 8 has been one of the most cherished declarations of faith in all of the Bible. The apostle Paul considered the most familiar "what if" questions and came to the following conclusion.

Romans 8:38

³⁸ For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Our daily lives have been turned upside down as the coronavirus has spread around the world. We all have questions. At one time or another, perhaps all of the time, we have wondered what if the worst happens. As you're asking questions always be mindful that God is greater than Google. Ask Him.

Seek Him. As you do, you will be reminded of the truth of His word, which will provide peace and anchor your soul.

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way” (**Psalm 46:1–2**) He who keeps us will not slumber. He is our keeper, and he alone keeps our life (**Psalm 121:3, 5, 7**). Regardless of what happens, even if there are no sheep in the fields and no cattle in the stalls we can still rejoice in the God of our salvation (**Habakkuk 3:17–18**).

Remember that he who tells the ocean’s waves how far they can go (**Job 38:11**) has the situation perfectly under control. Pray that you will not fear what is happening rest knowing that even if the worst happens, even if we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, God will be there with us.

You are loved

Tony