**Jesus, Increase Our Faith**

*By Pedro Méndez*

**Readings**
​Habakkuk    1: 2-3. 2: 2-4
​Psalm            95: 1-2, 6-7, 8-9
​2 Timothy     1:6-8, 13-14
​ Luke              17:5-10

Have we ever complained to God about the injustice around the world, in our society/city/town, in our families, and, even, in our hearts? The Prophet Habakkuk (626-587 BC), in the first part of today’s first reading (1:2-3), complains to God, I would say in a very desperate tone, about the injustices of his time—ruin, misery, destruction, violence, strife and clamorous discord. Habakkuk cried out to God; but God, seemingly, did not listen to him. Have we not experienced this too? Have we not cried out to God regarding all the injustices, crimes and violence in the world, in our society/city/town, families, and, even, in our own selves; and, seemingly, God does not answer our prayers? Sometimes, the more we cry out, the more the violence seems to increase. Why does it happen? Maybe it is not that God does not answer our prayers. It might be that sin is a reality in a fallen humanity whose soul has been warped by pride. The Bible describes a person with a soul warped by pride as *wicked*. Thus, there is a reality to consider: some of the world’s inhabitants have accepted God’s love and others have not. It is also part of reality that the soul of the wicked—no matter how warped by pride is—can be transformed by God when he/she opens himself/herself totally to God’s limitless love.

The second part of the first reading describes, marvelously, God’s answer (2:2-4) to Habakkuk. *God’s answer is a hopeful promise of a new and unfailing vision in the midst of injustice*. Notice that God does not promise, according to the reading as it is presented, to stop injustice. Doing so could imply that God would *force* the will of the wicked to act in a just way. God, Love itself, does not force anybody, rather *He invites* the wicked to conversion by accepting his limitless love: “If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts,” (Psalm 95:8) proclaims today’s responsorial psalm. Then, the wicked decides to accept or reject God’s invitation. In this process of conversion, we, disciples of Jesus, are called to pray for them and to bear witness to the transforming love of God in our lives so that the wicked, by seeing our Christian life style, can turn his/her life to God. Thus, if God does not force the wicked to conversion out of respect for his/her free will and, by doing so, He does not stop injustice: *what can we, disciples of Jesus, wait for?* *We are called to hope in God’s unfailing promise and, by doing so, to live by faith: “the righteous live by their faith*” (Habakkuk 2:4b) proclaims the first reading.

Living by faith is crucial in our daily life. Living by faith is not merely living an optimistic lifestyle or a life based on abstract ideas and/or ideals. Faith cannot be produced by us. Faith is, primarily, a gift of God whose love and self-revelation provide us an “*assurance* of things to hope for [and] a *conviction* of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1). This assurance and conviction are firm because they come from God Himself; therefore they help us to endure *any* circumstance and messiness in our lives and in the world. Faith does not deny or alienate reality; but helps us to embrace reality by turning our whole selves to God. Thus, God is the source our faith. The Apostles might have had an “insight” about this by asking Jesus: *“Increase our faith”* (Luke 17:5). *Therefore,* *living by faith might mean to trust God by living out of the assurance and conviction He has provided us in the midst of all our daily circumstances—good and challenging ones*. This produces faithfulness to God and a spirit of service to others at all times, especially the most needed.

Now, how do we reach a life of faith? Saint Paul affirms: “Faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ” (Rom 10:17). Consequently, in the midst of our tensioned world—with its goodness and challenges—you and I, followers of Jesus Christ, are called to “hear the word of God, embrace it with a generous and good heart, and bear fruit through perseverance” (Luke 8:15). It seems to me that, sometimes, we are despaired and hopeless with our daily messy circumstances and challenges because *we do not hear, daily, what God is telling us through His unfailing word.*

God is inviting us, today, to allow Him to pervade us with assurance and conviction by hearing His word daily, because maybe there is a part of our being that needs to be converted to God. And God’s word is a word of love, security, forgiveness, peace, hope, and, ultimately, it is a Word who assumed humanity…it is Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. It is a Word that impels us to answer to God’s love with faithfulness and to serve others. *Lord Jesus, increase our faith*!