



Let All the Earth be Silent Before Him  
Habakkuk 2:20  
March 22, 2020

Last week we heard a message from Psalm 46 about the sovereignty of God and noted that we can trust him to take care of us in times of trouble. Today we are going to consider a more challenging message from God's word. We must be careful not to let our desire to feel good all the time cause us to resist hearing an important word from God.

This time of isolation and social distancing can be a good opportunity for us to practice the spiritual discipline of silence. Silence before God can have a variety of benefits, but three of the passages call us to silence in regard to sin and judgment.

In Zephaniah 1:7 the call to silence is in a context of God bringing judgments on the world and on his own people. In Habakkuk 2:20, the context is also judgment, with the added idea that God's judgments may not make sense to us. In Psalm 4:4 the context is that people who are not living right need to do some self-examination. These passages raise the question: Could Covid 19 be a judgment from God that calls us to humble and silence ourselves before him? Looking at what God has done in the past may help us decide.

When God sent the ten plagues on Egypt one of his purposes was to compel Pharaoh to change his mind and let the Israelites leave his country (Exodus 3:18-19; 7:3-5). Other times God used plagues to punish or discipline people (Numbers 14:11-12; Deuteronomy 28:58-59; Revelation 15:1-8). In Amos 4, God hoped

the plagues (v. 10) and other disasters (vv. 6-11) he sent would cause people to return to him.

God worked in similar ways in Haggai's day. His people were all very concerned about their own well-being, but they were neglecting to rebuild God's temple (1:1-3). So God limited their harvest and also sent a lack of satisfaction, blight, mildew, and hail, all in hopes that they would change their ways. But the people were not connecting the dots. So, four times God urges them to "give careful thought to your ways" (1:5, 7; 2:15, 18).

I am not a prophet and don't receive special revelation, so I don't know for certain what God may be doing right now. Based on how God has worked in the past, however, I believe it is fitting for us to at least "give careful thought to our ways." This is a good time to humbly confess that the Lord is still in his holy temple, keep silence, and search our hearts (Psalm 4:4).

Our current situation could be a wakeup call to take seriously sin in our lives we are already aware of. It could also be a spur for us to consider whether we are offending God in ways we are not even aware of. One way to explore that is by reading today's passages (book of Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Psalm 4), noting the kinds of sins that led God to bring his judgments on people in the past, and then prayerfully searching our hearts for similar sins. Some sins that stood out to me when I did this were being puffed up and having desires that are not upright (Hab. 2:4), complacency (Zeph. 1:12), not accepting correction (Zeph. 3:1-2, 7), and not rejoicing at other's blessings (Psalm 4:7).

Clearly, if our time of silence before God convicts us of sin, we should humble ourselves, confess our sins, and repent of them (remember Amos 4:10). Then we also need to remember and appeal to the steadfast love and mercy of the Lord (Lamentations 3:19-24; Hebrews 4:15-16; 1 John 1:9; cf. the last line of Habakkuk 3:2).

