

I Will Wait Quietly: The Divine Warrior and a People in Repose

Introduction

The Text

¹ A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet, according to Shigionoth.

² O LORD, I have heard the report of you, and your work, O LORD, do I fear. In the midst of the years revive it; in the midst of the years make it known; in wrath remember mercy. ³ God came from Teman, and the Holy One from Mount Paran. Selah His splendor covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise. ⁴ His brightness was like the light; rays flashed from his hand; and there he veiled his power. ⁵ Before him went pestilence, and plague followed at his heels. ⁶ He stood and measured the earth; he looked and shook the nations; then the eternal mountains were scattered; the everlasting hills sank low. His were the everlasting ways. ⁷ I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction; the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble. ⁸ Was your wrath against the rivers, O LORD? Was your anger against the rivers, or your indignation against the sea, when you rode on your horses, on your chariot of salvation? ⁹ You stripped the sheath from your bow, calling for many arrows. Selah You split the earth with rivers. ¹⁰ The mountains saw you and writhed; the raging waters swept on; the deep gave forth its voice; it lifted its hands on high. ¹¹ The sun and moon stood still in their place at the light of your arrows as they sped, at the flash of your glittering spear. ¹² You marched through the earth in fury; you threshed the nations in anger. ¹³ You went out for the salvation of your people, for the salvation of your anointed. You crushed the head of the house of the wicked, laying him bare from thigh to neck. Selah ¹⁴ You pierced with his own arrows the heads of his warriors, who came like a whirlwind to scatter me, rejoicing as if to devour the poor in secret. ¹⁵ You trampled the sea with your horses, the surging of mighty waters.

¹⁶ I hear, and my body trembles; my lips quiver at the sound; rottenness enters into my bones; my legs tremble beneath me. Yet I will quietly wait for the day of trouble to come upon people who invade us. (Hab. 3:1–16)

We're All Struggling with Something

A. I know that every single person in this room is struggling with something.

1. I know it, not just from personal experience, or from my time working with people as a pastor—I know it as a biblical fact.

a. This is a broken world. We are broken people. Therefore, at any point in time, until we are with God in glory, we will be struggling with something.

i. Sometimes it's more or less severe on the spectrum of things, but it's always there.

B. I wonder what it is for you right now? Maybe it's a whole constellation of things, a whole laundry list of issues. But what is it?

1. My bank account is draining.
2. My marriage is fracturing.
3. My kids aren't listening.
4. My health is depleting.
5. My boss is overbearing.
6. My project is failing.

a. My heart is heavy; my mind is cloudy; my feet are dragging . . . I'm struggling!

C. You know, whatever it is you are dealing with right now, here's what I want you to hear with crystal clarity at the outset of this sermon: God is fighting for you.

1. If you are a follower of Jesus, if he is your King, if God is your God, listen: God is fighting for you. And he wants you to know: it's going to be okay.

D. Perhaps you already picked up on this, but our text this morning presents God as the Divine Warrior fighting on behalf of his people—coming in to save the day, to save you and me.

1. And so that's what we're going to press into and consider for a bit here now. I've got just two headings for us, the majority of our time will go to this first one: (1) He Fights for Us ([vv. 3-15](#)); and (2) We Rest in Him ([v. 16](#)).

(1) He Fights for Us (vv. 3-15)

From Grumbling to Singing!

A. Before we really get going with this first heading, let me remind you what has transpired to this point.

1. Habakkuk has been lamenting and grumbling and complaining about the way God seems to be permitting evil to flourish in his life and in the world around. He, like you and I, has been struggling with some things.
2. And God graciously responds and lets him in on just what he is doing, where he is working, and what he's planning. He's going to raise up the Babylonians to judge and purify his people in the exile, but then he will also ultimately judge the Babylonians and bring his people back.
3. And, while Habakkuk had struggled greatly with all these things to this point, it seems now, as we come to [ch. 3](#), that something has shifted for him, quite dramatically in fact. For, as I've pointed out, we begin the book with his grumbling and complaining, but we end the book here with his singing, with a hymn of praise. The whole closing chapter is this song to God.

B. And last week, we zeroed in on [Hab. 3:1-2](#) in particular, and I identified a few steps that really seem to have made all the difference for him. Where did this magnificent shift come from?

1. Well, for one thing, he gets quiet before the LORD (as [Hab. 2:20](#) called for: “But the LORD is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him”).
 2. And, after quieting himself before, he finally hears from God. So he says in [Hab. 3:2](#): “O LORD, I have heard the report of you, and your work . . .” And we recognized that Habakkuk has now opened his Bible, as it were. He’s looking back at the Scriptural record that had been kept and was still developing to this point—a record of who God is and what he’s done in history for his people.
 3. And Habakkuk trembles before him. He fears this God. He fights for faith and comes out believing.
 4. But, more than that . . . he comes out singing!
- C. And as you might expect, then, the content of this song, centers around, I think, the very things he’d just been reflecting on in the Scriptures.
1. So to this point in redemptive history, if Habakkuk were looking back trying to remember who God is and what he’s done, well, the most significant thing he would have had to look back on was God’s redeeming activity in the Exodus from Egypt.
 - a. This was what really started the whole thing for the people of Israel. It’s where God miraculously brings them out from the house of slavery there under Pharaoh, he parts the Red Sea, brings them to Sinai, enters into covenant with them, and leads them through the wilderness and the river Jordan and into the Promised Land.
 - i. So one commentator sums it up for us like this: “From his position in the middle of Israelite history, the [prophet] looks back to God’s mighty actions at the exodus and ponders the future” (TOTC). As we said last week: he goes backward to go forward.
- D. So it’s this report of God’s work in the Exodus that Habakkuk would have had to reflect upon and, therefore, no surprise, this is really what he’s going to be singing about.
1. And it’s this song of his that we’re going to consider together now in more detail . . .

A Journey Through the Lines (Verse by Verse)

- A. Now, I just want to move verse by verse through this.
1. And I know it may feel a bit just like a running commentary or something.
 2. But I’d encourage you to see it as if we’re essentially going on a journey together through the lines of this song.
 - a. We’re going to take in some of the sights, make observations, draw out implications, things like this. And as with any journey, some places the view will be so breathtaking we’ll feel drawn to linger, and other places, though you wish you could tarry, you may have to breeze on by.

- B. But in it all, under this first heading, we're going to see, we're going to admire, the one who is fighting for us. God is a Divine Warrior, our Holy Hero.

Verse 3

- A. So let's begin the journey by looking there at v. 3 again: "God came from Teman, and the Holy One from Mount Paran. Selah His splendor covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise."
- B. Straightaway, especially with the mention of "Mount Paran" here, we encounter clear echoes of the Exodus and the ensuing trip towards the Promised Land.
 - 1. For this region of Paran is in between Egypt and Canaan and it shows up in the Scriptures as one of their stopping points along the way (Num. 10:11-12; cf. Deut. 33:1-2).

- C. But aside from this, there are a couple other observations I wanted to make here . . .

OBSERVATION #1: "GOD CAME"

- A. First, make note of what Habakkuk says there at the beginning: "God came . . ."
- B. Now, this might not immediately strike you as all that significant, but consider it in juxtaposition with the way he began this book. As I've said he was complaining time and again about the apparent idleness of God in the midst of his struggles.
 - 1. So we read in the opening verses of ch. 1: "² O LORD, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not hear? Or cry to you "Violence!" and you will not save? ³ Why do you make me see iniquity, and why do you idly look at wrong? (vv. 2-3).
 - 2. Or similarly again back in Hab. 1:13: "You who are of purer 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?"
 - a. In other words: He began this whole thing grumbling and grouching to God about the fact that he's not seeming to be doing anything about the evil round about him. "You're not coming."
 - b. But then here, after silencing himself before the Lord in his holy temple, after opening the Scriptures and hearing the report of his works in years past, after tremblingly trusting the record and making note of how it relates to the current circumstances he is facing . . . he finds fresh encouragement for his own soul, and he sings the Scripture back to God: "God came . . ." "My God doesn't forget his people in their suffering . . . he comes!"
- C. And you have to remember the same for yourself, when you feel God is idle. He's not. He's fighting. He's coming.
 - 1. And for us, we now have a lot more than just the Exodus to look back to for this, don't we? We can trace out the history of redemption much further than Habakkuk ever could.

- a. We keep reading in our Bibles and, actually, we see God’s faithfulness to Habakkuk—how he answers Habakkuk’s prayer in this very text and fulfills his hope for a return from the coming exile (cf. [Ezra 1:1ff.](#)). God proves himself faithful yet again. He puts down the Babylonians and brings back his people from all the places they’d been scattered, just as he said he would.
 - b. But, of course, even more than the Exodus and the return from exile, we have Christmas, don’t we? In the midst of our mess—when we were lost in our way, dead in our sin . . . God came—not in a pillar of cloud or fire, but in the person of Jesus Christ.
- D. So, do you know what? Christian, you can be confident: he will come for you. He’ll show up in your struggles and bring good out from it in the end as well.

OBSERVATION #2: “HIS SPLENDOR COVERED THE HEAVENS”

- A. The second thing to note concerns this remark that [“his splendor covered the heavens.”](#)
- 1. Whatever it may be referring to in the Exodus, I’m not entirely sure. Perhaps it refers to the thunderous appearance of God up on Mount Sinai after he brought them out from Egypt ([Exod. 19:16-20](#)). Perhaps it’s something else.
- B. But what I love about this is it immediately gets us to look up. [“His splendor covered the heavens . . .”](#) We look up and we see . . . his glory!
- 1. You see, I’m sure you’ll agree, one of the things that is often so hard to do when you’re in the midst of suffering or trial is to see beyond it, to see above it, to look up.
 - a. We get so consumed with our stuff, we go to bed thinking about it, we wake up thinking about it, we’re drowning in it. We don’t have time to look up.
- C. But that which feels almost impossible for us to do is the very thing we must do.
- 1. So God says to the suffering saints in [Isa. 40:26-28](#): [“²⁶ Lift up your eyes on high and see: who created these? He who brings out their host by number, calling them all by name; by the greatness of his might, and because he is strong in power, not one is missing. ²⁷ Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, ‘My way is hidden from the LORD, and my right is disregarded by my God’? ²⁸ Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth.”](#) And I’m fighting for you.
 - 2. God essentially does the same sort of thing with Job ([Job 38-40](#)).
 - 3. And what about Abraham? When he’s struggling with the fact that his wife is barren, he’s grown old, and he has no heir, do you remember what God does? [“\[H\]e brought him outside and said, ‘Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them’”](#) ([Gen. 15:5](#)). [“Look up. Consider the splendor of the stars. The one who made all of this, is fighting on your behalf. It’s going to be okay.”](#)
 - 4. Or do you remember Stephen, the first Christian martyr. As the angry mob rushes upon him to stone him, what does he do? [“But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God”](#) ([Acts 7:55](#)). He looks up. He

sees the one who is fighting for him, who lives to make intercession for him, and he finds fresh strength to carry on to the last breath.

- D. Listen, I know you may feel like you are under the waves right now, but oh let me encourage you . . . look up! The splendor of the one who is fighting for you is covering the heavens. You are not alone in this. He's here to help!

Verse 4

- A. Look at v. 4 now: "His brightness was like the light; rays flashed from his hand; and there he veiled his power."
- B. If you have little kids, you know that they never like the dark. Why? Because it's scary. You feel vulnerable. You feel like something could sneak up on you out of the shadows and you would never know.
1. So light in general is a good thing. And light breaking into darkness is a marvelous thing. It's what we long for.
 - a. I've always loved those verses in Ps. 130:5-6: " ⁵ I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in his word I hope; ⁶ my soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen for the morning, more than watchmen for the morning."
- C. Some of us feel like that, right now don't we? Like we're sitting in the dark, and we're just waiting, looking for God to come like that first ray of dawn's light streaking up from the black horizon.
1. Let me just remind you, Luke goes out of his way to say that Jesus was raised from the dead when? "[A]t early dawn" (Luke 24:1). He is that ray, he is that streak of light . . . for us!

Verse 5

- A. Now look at v. 5: "Before him went pestilence, and plague followed at his heels."
- B. Certainly, many of us may recall these things and their association with the Exodus. YHWH, in an effort to redeem his people, brought pestilence and plague upon the Egyptians (cf. Exod. 9:3, 15; Ps. 78:48, 50).
- C. But there's likely something else in play here as well.
1. You see, for one thing the Hebrew word translated "plague," *resheph*, is the name of the Canaanite god of the plague.
 2. And it seems the word translated "pestilence," *daver*, was also associated with a god of the Canaanites.
 - a. So there's this wonderful polemic here against the faulty worship of false gods. For they are seen here not as gods to be feared, but under the authority and subject to the orders of the one true God YHWH.

- D. Now I bring this out in particular because in our times of suffering and trial, we face what we might call “pestilence” and “plague”, don’t we? Whatever that is for you, just fill in the blank.
1. But often we’re tempted to feel like such things have a certain power over us—like we’re helpless before them, like they’re threatening to crush us, and we’re just at their mercy.
 2. But no! Don’t fear such things ultimately, fear the Lord who is over them. They operate under his control.
 - a. And even if we face such things when our own Babylon comes in, as Habakkuk will (cf. [Hab. 3:17-19](#) where there’s no fruit on the vine or food in the field, when there’s “pestilence” and “plague”), God is ultimately able to use them for good. They work for him. They’re under his control.
- E. This is why Paul could say in [2 Cor. 4:17](#) that all our “affliction” is just “light” and “momentary” and it “is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.”
1. God does not just get us through our suffering by the skin of our teeth, he makes our suffering a servant of our glory.
 - a. Your trials, your pestilence and plague, they cannot crush you if God is for you, because they work for him!

Verse 6

- A. Take a look now at [v. 6](#): “He stood and measured the earth; he looked and shook the nations; then the eternal mountains were scattered; the everlasting hills sank low. His were the everlasting ways.”
- B. Mountains were considered a part of the foundation of the earth. Hence, they’re called “eternal mountains” here or “everlasting hills.”
1. The idea is that these things seem about as solid and permanent as it gets so far as the earth is concerned. Though we can move many things of the earth from one point to another, none of us in our right mind would ever think we can move a mountain.
 - a. Oh I know we use the phrase, but none of us thinks we could ever literally do such a thing. It’s impossible.
- C. And yet Habakkuk is here saying that, that before us which seems so impossible to move, so permanent, we’ve given up hope of it ever being any different . . . he’s able to move it, he’s able to change it.
1. I love how this verse ends: you thought the mountains and the hills were everlasting, but even they give way to the everlasting God: “His were the everlasting ways.”
 - a. He’s the only truly eternal reality. He is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. And, again, he is fighting for you.

- D. This verse likely refers again to the quaking of Mt. Sinai after the Exodus from Egypt: “Now Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke because the LORD had descended on it in fire. The smoke of it went up like the smoke of a kiln, and the whole mountain trembled greatly” (Ex. 19:18).
1. “You thought you’d be in chains forever there in Egypt. But I can move mountains. And I do it for you.”
- E. Do you have any mountains in your life right now?

Verses 7-12

- A. [Vv. 7-12](#) is that part of our journey that we’re going to have to just fly by a little quicker.
- B. Habakkuk continues to use poetic language to remember the power of God in the Exodus, his redeeming grace. But you know it’s in these verses that you really start to see more of his wrath come out in full color.
1. So he’s splitting the Red Sea; he’s ripping apart the River Jordan; he’s pictured as if on a chariot riding into war; he’s letting arrows fly from his bow; the nations are trembling.
 - a. So [v. 12](#): “You marched through the earth in fury; you threshed the nations in anger.”
- C. And now here’s where I want to bring out this idea that God’s judgement on evil and evildoers is actually a part of our salvation, it’s part of the good news.
1. I’ve said things like this before, but because God’s judgement and wrath are so out of favor, because they’re such unpopular notions in our secular culture today, I always feel the need to point it out where I can.
 - a. The bottom line is: you don’t have to be a Christian to get this. We all understand this, when we really stop to consider it. Judgement on evil is good news. It’s salvation.
- D. The example that comes to my mind is really the difference between what happened at Uvalde a number of months back and what happened in St. Louis just a few days ago.
1. Some of you may not have even heard much about the school shooting that took place in St. Louis.
 2. But I know everyone by now is aware of what took place at the elementary school in Uvalde and the outrage that’s still at a boiling point concerning it all.
- E. So what’s the difference?
1. At Uvalde, the police, the ones whom Paul would say are to wield the sword of God for justice and righteousness (cf. [Rom. 13:4](#)), well they failed. The shooter was given well over an hour to mow down helpless little children. He killed 19 of them and two teachers.

- a. Judgment never came. Or I suppose I should say, it came, but 74 minutes too late. So there was no salvation for these kids. There was no good news.
 - i. Listen, the wrath of God isn't bad if it's doing away with evil . . . it's good. It's what we hunker down under our desks and pray for, right?
- 2. On the flip side, in St. Louis, this kid had an AR-15 style rifle (the same kind of gun as the guy in Uvalde), and he had over 600 rounds of ammunition, and yet only two people were killed. As horrible and painful as that is, it could've been so much worse.
 - a. So what happened? The police acted and they acted fast. Records show that they shot and killed the suspect within ten minutes of arriving at the school. Judgement was swift and sure.
 - i. So Michael Sack, the St. Louis Police Commissioner, is recorded as saying: "This could've been a horrific scene—it was not, by the grace of God."
 - (1) Justice and grace, wrath and mercy, judgment and salvation, go hand in hand.
 - (a) No one is protesting against those officers for being too quick in their response. They are praising them. Because they saved who knows how many people.
- F. And that's the idea in Habakkuk's song here. God comes for judgment, but he comes also for salvation.
 - 1. So notice the way v. 12 transitions into the first part of v. 13: " ¹² You marched through the earth in fury; you threshed the nations in anger. ¹³ You went out for the salvation of your people"

Verses 13-15

- A. Now, as we turn to vv. 13-15 in full, something amazing comes into view . . .
- B. For here we see not just references to God himself, but a reference to someone called his "anointed" (v. 13).
 - 1. It's a word that refers to the king of Israel, the king in the line of David.
 - 2. But it's also a word that refers to that end-times king, that one who will come and sit on the throne of David forever, the one promised of God whose kingdom will have no end.
 - a. In the Hebrew, it's the word **Mashiach**.
 - b. In the Greek, it's the word **Christos**.
 - i. The Messiah. The Christ. It's a word that ultimately refers, therefore, to Jesus.

- C. And with this we're shown it's not just God the Father who is fighting for us, but God the Son.
1. And in the words that follow here, I think we're given both what he's come to do and how he will do it.
- D. For the what, look at the latter part of v. 13: "You crushed the head of the house of the wicked, laying him bare from thigh to neck." It's a bit gory, I get that. I suppose with Halloween coming up it's fitting. But what does it mean?
1. Certainly, in the immediate context, something like Egypt or Babylon is in view.
 2. But when we broaden out our Biblical scope, one can't help but see in this an echo of what God promised Adam and Eve after the fall into sin and the subsequent curse.
- E. In [Gen. 3:15](#), God, speaking to the serpent, promises that a child will come sometime in the future—and this child will do away with sin, overturn the curse, and he'll make war on Satan who stands behind this serpent: "He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel." "Oh you'll get him in the heel Satan, but he'll get you in the head."
1. It's a picture of the mortal combat that would take place between Jesus and the forces of evil, reaching its climax point at the cross.
 2. It's also a picture of the atonement and the ironic triumph of our Savior.
 - a. He's going to get victory over you, serpent, by letting you (momentarily at least) get victory over him.
 - b. He's going to put you to death by letting you put him to death.
 - i. As Jesus is suffering in our place for our sin there on the cross, he is being bruised on the heel, as it were.
 - ii. But it is there on that cross that he is, at the same time, delivering the death blow to the devil's head.
- F. I think that's the sort of thing [Hab. 3:14](#) is pointing us to: "You pierced with his own arrows the heads of his warriors . . ." Did you hear that? Here's where we see the how of our Messiah. How does he get victory over the enemy?
1. He uses their own arrows to do it.
 2. The arrows they let fly in his direction end up sinking into their own hearts.
 3. The realm of devil and demons didn't realize, in killing him, they were, in effect, killing themselves.
 - a. Because on the third day, at dawn, he would rise—moving aside the mountain of my guilt, making way for the forgiveness of my sins, overturning the curse of God's holy wrath, overcoming the power of the grave, overwhelming the darkness with light, opening wide the gate to paradise and life with God eternal.
- G. It's the true Exodus and entrance into the land of promise. It's the true return from the place of exile. It's the true and everlasting redemption.

1. And it's all because God is fighting for you. Turn from your sin and trust him for all of this. It's yours freely by grace through faith.

a. And this leads to the second heading and the last bit I really wanted to say . . .

(2) We Rest in Him (v. 16)

Something Deeper

- A. Look at v. 16 now: "I hear, and my body trembles; my lips quiver at the sound; rottenness enters into my bones; my legs tremble beneath me. Yet I will quietly wait for the day of trouble to come upon people who invade us."
- B. Here's where Habakkuk really draws all of this to a point of application for himself and his situation.
 1. He's gotten silent before God. He's reviewed the biblical record of the Exodus. He's fought for faith in that. He's sung about it.
 2. And now he comes out here and he just says: "If you're the God of the Exodus, if you're the Divine Warrior who fights for your people and their deliverance, I know you're going to fight for me. And, therefore, I don't have to get all angsty and anxious, I don't have to take matters into my hands with these Babylonians when they come. I can quietly wait for your salvation. Because you're fighting for me, I can rest in you."
- C. I get the idea of rest from the Hebrew word that's translated in the ESV here "quietly wait."
 1. There's more to this idea than just waiting around.
 2. There's something deeper in view. It speaks to an underlying rest of the heart.
 - a. The word is used to refer to the Sabbath rest that God enters into on the seventh day of creation (cf. [Exod. 20:11](#)) and that he subsequently calls us to enter into after him (cf. [Deut. 5:14](#)).
 - i. This is not just waiting around, this is resting deeply, in view of God, his word and his work.
- D. And let's be clear on something else: Habakkuk's circumstances don't immediately change.
 1. That's the point of all that he says in the first part of the verse: "My bodies trembling. My lips are quivering. My bones are rotting. My legs are giving way." The approaching Babylonian war machine is terrifying.
 - a. And God doesn't just snap his fingers and remove that.
 - b. And Habakkuk's rest doesn't come only after God's delivered him.
 - i. It comes in the midst of it all. Because he knows, though it looks crazy, God is fighting for him and he will work it all for good in the end.

- E. So whatever your struggle is, and however long it's going to go on, Jesus is calling you into this deep, soul-satisfying rest today. He's fighting for you, you can rest in him.
- F. What are you worried about?
1. Your money?
 - a. You don't have to try to take it into your own hands, panic, fret, like you don't have a Father's whose happy to provide. You do.
 - b. You can rest. You may still go try to get a job or you may still try to rework your budget, but it doesn't have to be from panic, it can come from a place of peace. Because you know he's fighting for you. He's got you.
 2. Have you been wounded in a relationship? Who hasn't.
 - a. And you want to get justice, right, take it into your own hands, get back at them.
 - b. But you don't have to give in to vengeance or bitterness or cold indifference and standoffishness. You can bless and trust. You can rest. Because he's fighting for you, he'll make it right in the end.
 3. Or maybe it's your sin. You see the ways you've failed God and others. It plays over in your head again and again. It's a mountain of guilt, an avalanche of shame. What are you going to do?
 - a. Buck up and get better in your own strength? Read another self-help book. Memorize another verse. Make another vow to God about how you'll clean up your act?
 - b. Some of that may help, but first, you rest. You fall down at the foot of the cross, and you receive grace. You know, like Stephen did, he's living to make intercession for you. He's fighting for you. He's always ready to forgive you.
- G. I could keep going but we'll just stop there. Because he's fighting for you, you can rest in him.