Waiting on the Lord

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Scripture: Habakkuk 1:12-2:1

12 Are you not from everlasting,
O LORD my God, my Holy One?
We shall not die.
O LORD, you have ordained them as a judgment,
and you, O Rock, have established them for reproof.
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?
14 You make mankind like the fish of the sea,
like crawling things that have no ruler.
15 He brings all of them up with a hook;
he drags them out with his net;
he gathers them in his dragnet;
so he rejoices and is glad.
16 Therefore he sacrifices to his net
and makes offerings to his dragnet;
for by them he lives in luxury,
and his food is rich.
17 Is he then to keep on emptying his net
and mercilessly killing nations forever?

2 I will take my stand at my watchpost
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.

Introduction

Waiting is hard, isn't it? We know something about waiting in our life. We wait for little things, small things, everyday things, the shower to warm up, coffee to brew. We wait in traffic, we wait for websites to load. We wait for food at a restaurant. We wait and we wait and it certainly reveals something to us as we're often frustrated in our times of waiting. We want things now. We don't know why it won't hurry up and happen on our timetable. Doesn't everyone know what I have to get to? And how important I am and all the things I have to get done today. And we wait and we wait and we struggle in it. We know how things ought to happen and when they ought to happen

and delay can frustrate us. Well, waiting is certainly a big deal in the Bible. It speaks to us a lot about waiting and certainly biblical waiting is different than waiting on coffee to brew and those kinds of things. But it is a struggle nonetheless. is a waiting on God, a waiting on the Lord.

It's easy to look through different portions of God's word and see people who tried to speed the process up, if you will, take matters into their own hands. Abraham, of course, comes to mind, and there are plenty of others who try to take God's timetable and make it their own, or they struggle and wonder at these things. And Habakkuk teaches us what it's like to to wait upon the Lord, to wait for the Lord in the midst of struggle, when things don't make sense, when there's violence and injustice all around, when there's sin even within.

And Habakkuk has these what are called complaints. Maybe not complaining in every sense of the word like we often think of it, always with a negative connotation. But he's struggling, he's wrestling, crying out to the Lord with these things. Things don't make sense. Circumstances can often be like that, can't they? Life is overwhelming. Things don't always make sense to us. And yet, we have to wait.

We face trials of various kind. And we wait. We cry out to the Lord. He doesn't answer like we think or like we want, like we expect. That's what Habakkuk is struggling with. He's seeing this sin and violence and he's crying out to the Lord to do something about it. And just when the Lord says, "Well, I am doing something about it." Well, that doesn't sit well with Habakkuk either. He doesn't really like that answer. That's what life is like sometimes, isn't it? We don't like the answer. And so, he continues to struggle and wrestle and he's still praying, "How can the Lord use someone like the the wicked Babylonians as his instrument?"

What is the Lord doing? Well, he's teaching his people to wait. He's going to teach that to Habakkuk over and over again, to trust him in the midst of the pain and the sorrow and the complications, the the strange things of life. And certainly, we'll notice that Habakkuk teaches us what waiting means, what waiting on the Lord looks like here in this passage. It consists of three things really.

I Waiting Looks Like Worship | Habakkuk 1:12-13

Waiting first of all looks like worship. You see that in verses 12 and even 13, primarily in verse 12. But but Habakkuk is coming to some conclusions you might say. And he's doing this in the context of worship. He's worshiping the Lord.

That's his sort of second, as it's called, complaint. But it doesn't begin with the complaint. It begins with what he knows about God. That's where our complaints, if you will, should begin. That's what sets things in their right perspective. He might not understand God's providence and all the complexities of it, all the struggles with it, it might not make sense. You might not be able to put all the pieces of the puzzle together and connect the dots all the time and understand why this and why that. I don't always know.

I don't always know perhaps what God is particularly up to, but I know who God is. Perhaps it's cliche, but I think it's true. It's the idea that you might not always be able to trace the hand of God in everything, but you can know his heart. You can know who God is in the midst of all of the trouble, all of the confusion. And that's what he's settling on. Recognizing the the character of God, and it brings a sense of assurance. I don't know everything.

I don't know why this is happening or why that's happening. I can't trace it all out, but I know who God is and what he's like. And he's pondering the character of God and dwelling upon it,

worshiping even. I think you see in verse 12, "Are you not from everlasting?" he says is the first thing he's noting about God and dwelling upon God and in an act of worship. It sets things in context. Are you not from everlasting? I think everlasting is not a bad translation, a bad word, but it might be confusing. There's another Hebrew word that's used throughout the Old Testament in the Psalms to describe God who is eternal, everlasting, that sort of thing. And we don't deny that. We say yes and amen to that. But I think Habakkuk is getting at something a little different, though he's not denying that doctrine of God being eternal and everlasting in that sense, but it's really the idea that he's from ancient times or from of old.

Other translations might say that if you're looking at a different translation, he's from ancient times, from of old. It's a word that's associated with the direction of the east, which sounds maybe strange. Where do you come up with that? And it's the idea of the of the sun rising in the east. And the Hebrews would think about that in the direction of origin, you might say, and thinking of something that happens consistently. It just keeps coming up day after day after day. And it began to be associated with that idea of something of old, of ancient times, and that's what Habakkuk is dwelling on. Yes, God is eternal. He's going to even acknowledge that in his next phrase, how he describes God. But here he's saying something of this, that God's character is unchanging. God himself is unchanging. He is the same God yesterday and today and forever.

And that sets the problems in their right perspective. He is as Daniel would reflect upon in Daniel 7, the ancient of days. It's the kind of terminology Habakkuk is using and reflecting upon - that while all of this is strange and he doesn't know how to work out the the fact that God is using the wicked Babylonians as his instrument. You know what? God never changes. and I can rest upon that God is the same always. And you can look back in history as one Puritan writer said - that God's providence is best read like Hebrew – backwards. And that's true. you you get a sense of that and that's what he's reflecting on here - looking back to the same God who knows how to smash the Egyptians, who knows how to deliver his people from Egypt and smash them and part the seas and provide mana from heaven. And you can look back, and Habakkuk is reflecting on that this - the God who sets everything in its perspective, the God who does that, who's committed to his people no matter what.

That's what's going to drive him, and we'll look at it a little bit closer, but that's what drives him to say, "We shall not die." Why? Because God is the same yesterday and today and forever. He delivers his people. And I might not be able to trace everything out perfectly. We might not be immune from devastation, but somehow we're secure through it. That's why David would pray the way he would pray, reflecting on the Lord being his shepherd, guiding him by the hand through the valley of the shadow of death. Not around it, but God being with him through it and having to go through that valley of the shadow of death, but not being alone in it.

That's what Habakkuk is recognizing and pondering and worshiping God for. That He is from everlasting or from ancient days. The same God back then, the same God today as he was back then, if you will, who's with his people. His unchanging character secures everything. That's where his confidence is grounded - in God's unchanging character. When our troubles and trials seem immense and unending, there's nothing that will quite strengthen our faith as focusing on the God who is from of old or from everlasting, whose arms are everlasting. Those same arms underneath and round about his people.

It's why Jesus said what he said in John chapter 6 and John chapter 10, reminding them of who he is, that none can snatch from his hand those who are his. They are ever so secure. They might have to go through hard times and suffering and trial of various kind. But he will hold them, as he's the same God today as he was yesterday and before that from ancient times.

Secondly, he reflects on God's character in regard to his being self-existent, if you will. That might seem like a lofty sort of thing to think about. You know it in the all caps word of LORD. That all caps word is the same word that was used in Exodus 3 and how God revealed himself to Moses in the burning bush. Who shall I tell the people has sent me? You tell them, “I am has sent you”. I am who I am has sent you. Sounds like a strange way to put it. Why is Habakkuk thinking about that? The Lord's people have reflected on that and called God as he has revealed himself in that kind of way. I am as we say Yahweh. I am who I am. And of course, Jesus would use those very words to describe himself, “before Abraham was I am.” And the Pharisees knew what he meant. He was saying he was God and is God. They were ready to stone him for it. And God here, describing himself and Habakkuk clinging to that. This is the God who is not bound by time. He is the creator of all things, and he's self-existent. Never being created, never have been created. He created all things. He brought all things into existence. And what does that do? Well, it shows you how how big he is, if you can say it that way. He is bigger than the Chaldeans.

He is greater than your problems, my problems. He's not bound by time. He is not ever, as one pastor once said, he is never in a hurry. He's not ringing his hands wondering what to do, fretting over everything that we fret about. He is Yahweh, and he is one who enters in, draws near. He's the covenant-keeping God. That's also not only is he the self-existing God that all caps LORD describes him that way, but he's the God who enters into a covenant relationship with his people.

The God who comes near, we might say in flesh and bone in the Lord Jesus Christ coming near, drawing near - that near. He is dependent on nothing, the self-existing God who draws near to his people and that sets things in their right perspective. All of the problems, all of the troubles. It says, as we perhaps sing sometimes, turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in his wonderful face and the things of the earth grow strangely dim, don't they?

The light of his glory and grace. That's what he's doing here. And in sense that's what we do every Lord's day. We do it on a on a personal basis for sure. But we gather together and we remember who God is. We worship God and it sets every problem, every trouble, every trial in its proper place. It is not God. There's only one God. And your problem is not him. He is the self-existing God who knows all things and does all things well. And more than that, he is almighty. He is God. That Hebrew word, he is the Lord my God.

People of course use that terminology haphazardly and in vain you might say, but it's precious to us. He is Elohim - is the Hebrew word. He is God, the creator of all things. He not only exists above it all and has always been, but he is the one who brought it into existence and who spoke it. When we say that and confess that kind of thing and Paul will remind us of the God who said, "Let there be light." And light was and he just spoke the word light and it happened, right? The mighty God who speaks things into existence. Is anything impossible with him?

It's what Jesus was teaching his disciples - to think about in that boat on the on the the waters where there was a great storm and he spoke and wind and waves obeyed his voice. He was saying to them in the boat, "I am God who made all these things." And what's the right response? Fear me. That's what we are to do in the midst of our troubles and our trials.

Trust the one whose voice the wind and waves obey. That's what Zephaniah even would say. The Lord your God is in your midst, a mighty one to save. Is anything too hard for the Lord?

No, of course not. We have to remind ourselves of that, don't we, in the midst of it. Are you not from everlasting, oh Lord, my God, my holy one? He is holy. He is other. I need to remember that he is in some sense not like me - in every sense, I guess you might say. But he is not like me. He is the creator and I am the creature. He is the holy one. That's the idea of it. He's holy other. I don't

need to think about him and try to fit him in my little categories. His ways are not my ways. His thoughts not my thoughts.

Let me trust him and take him at his word. He is almighty God, the creator, the holy one. And whatever else might be uncertain, Habakkuk knows something about God, he is the holy one. And do you see as Martin Luther said, that the heart of religion lies in its personal pronouns? Habakkuk says, "Oh Lord, my God, *my* holy one." He's not simply thinking about God as somewhere up there and out there, but he is *my* savior, *my* God, *my* holy one. We see that and we're meant to cling to it. And do you notice what else he is saying about God and his character and tracing it out and thinking about it and dwelling upon? It is that he is sovereign in the midst of all of it. I might not even like it. I might not understand it, but I know he is sovereign. You see in verse 12 again, you have ordained them as a judgment. That's not just pie in the sky. We reformed folk love to throw around the terminology of “sovereign” and we gladly do it. We don't shy away from it. We're not embarrassed by it. We don't need to excuse it. It's the way the Bible speaks. God is sovereign in creation and salvation, in everything.

He is in control, sovereign. And that's where Habakkuk lands and drives us to - you have ordained them. We wrestle in prayer and Paul would wrestle with the Lord - remove this thorn, three times he's praying that and the Lord didn't remove it and there's something there to be learned. I can pray and it's okay to pray for the Lord to remove things, but he might not. But I can be sure whatever it is the Lord has ordained, he ordains whatsoever comes to pass and I need to reckon with that, bow to him. The Babylonians aren't ultimately in control.

Suffering isn't in control. Death isn't in control. God is. That's why when you read through a book like Job and it's hard and it's painful and you think about the sufferings of the Lord himself, the Lord Jesus, and it sets that in context, you think about your own trials and troubles and you're reminded right from the outset, the devil is not in control. It is God who said something to the devil and who initiated that conversation, “Have you considered my servant Job?” And it is God who is sovereign over everything. Our sicknesses, our losses, rebellious children, financial troubles, trouble at home, trouble at work.

Yes, there might be certain times that are appropriate to say it versus others. But we do believe that God is working all things together for our good. He's one who works good out of evil. He ordains it. And he is dependable, isn't he? You have ordained them as a judgment. And you, oh rock, there's something stable about God. You can depend upon him. I don't have to understand it all, but I know he's trustworthy. And more than that, he's fatherly in it. You have ordained them as a reproof.

You have establish them for reproof. The Lord reproves, rebukes, he disciplines those whom he loves. I don't understand it all. It's not always directly tied again as Jesus taught, it's not always tied and I can trace, well, I sinned in this way and therefore God's punished me for this by this certain outcome. That might be true sometimes, but it's not always. And Jesus taught us not to always directly correlate those things. But I know he's a God who disciplines those whom he loves. He reproves by his word, even sometimes by his look.

Not that we see God in that way, but you think of the way Jesus looked at Peter. And he went away weeping. The Lord reproves by his word in those kinds of ways. And what is all that led to for Habakkuk? Well, we shall not die, he says. Was that going to be true of everybody as the Babylonians came sweeping in? Physically, they might die. I think Habakkuk certainly knew that. But ultimately, we will not. We will not die. Ultimately, we won't. Why? Because of who God is and what he has promised.

It's the same God who promised, “I will crush the head of the serpent through my son whom I will send.” You might be cast out east of Eden in the midst of all the wilderness. But God sent one to go into that wilderness and overthrow the tempter and undergo the pain and sorrow as people who are sinners.

And so even that I think Habakkuk is pointing us, isn't he, to the Lord Jesus Christ when you can make such a statement. This is how Jesus spoke to his disciples even to you who trust in him believe on the Lord Jesus Christ you will be saved. And Jesus would say, "Everyone who eats this bread, drinks this cup, he will live forever. I am the resurrection and the life. All who believe in me will never die."

How can he make such a claim? Because he's God and he's the one who suffered the punishment due to our sin and rose from the grave and conquered sin and death. And while everything might not make sense, that does. God knows what he's doing. We can worship him though it might lead to to wonder.

II Waiting Looks Like Wonder | Habakkuk 1:13-17

That's the second point that you'll see. I know I spent most of the time on point one and maybe that's what preachers too often do, but it's where he leads us not only from worship but to wonder in a sense. He's perplexed still. Worshiping God doesn't take away all of our problems.

It might lead us to more questions and continued perplexity. I suppose that's where Habakkuk is. He's wrestling in prayer. You see in verse 13 again, you are of purer eyes to see evil and cannot look at wrong. I know this of God and there's no darkness at him. He tempts no one to sin. All of that you're pure and you can't look at wrong even.

Then why do you idly look at traitors and remain silent when the wicked swallows up the man more righteous than he? He's struggling. He's wrestling, seeing the Babylonians come and wipe out nations before them and people seem to be brought to mankind in verse 14 like fish of the sea, crawling things that have no ruler. And these Babylonians just come and they're ruthless and heartless and tyrannical and bloodthirsty money loving self-idolators. Their only goal is their glory. And Habakkuk's looking, “how can you allow this”? And he's taking that to God in prayer, he's wrestling and it's the way the Lord works in our own lives I suppose that providence can often test us. God never tempts us to sin, but he does test us and refine faith and causes us to struggle and wrestle in prayer as we even confessed earlier in the Westminster confession faith - teaches us to pray, teaches us to cling to God. to to wrestle with him in prayer and that's a good thing isn't it? He will teach us though life doesn't always make sense, I know who God is and I can go to him in prayer and cast my anxieties upon him. He knows what I need even before I ask. And he's a God who cares for his people and says, "Yes, cast them upon me. All your anxieties”, Jesus teaches us, all of them. Every last one. “All of your problems and heartaches and heartburn and pain and trouble and sorrow, cast it upon me." That's what Habakkuk is doing, asking these kinds of questions.

And God's providence might seem perplexing, but we know who God is. We know what he's doing ultimately as we look to his promises.

III Waiting Looks Like Watching | Habakkuk 2:1

And that's where he drives us thirdly to think about what Habakkuk is doing here in verse one of chapter 2. He's he's watching. He's not only worshiping the Lord and who he is, filled with a sense

of wonder and maybe even confusion and perplexity about it all, but he's committed to watching for the Lord. I will take my stand at my watch post 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. There's a certain posture from Habakkuk that's good. I don't always know what's swirling around. I don't know always know what's in the future and what's tomorrow and all of those things, but I know the Lord and I know what he's told me and I'm going to watch there. I'm going to fix my eyes in that direction and not upon my circumstance, not upon my trouble, my heartache, my problems. I'm gonna look to the Lord. It's exactly what Jehoshaphat was doing when he saw the great horde coming before them. He went to worship the Lord and he's perplexed by it all. In fact, he's overwhelmed by it all. Have you ever felt like that in a day, maybe in a season of life? Overwhelmed with what's before you? Overwhelmed with fear and gripped with it. Jehoshaphat was.

How did he deal with it? We do not know what to do, but our eyes are upon you, oh Lord, he's looking to the Lord, and we look to him. We look at his word and see what he tells us. And that's what directs us and redirects us again and again. We are transformed by the renewal of our minds. And our minds need to be fixed upon the word of God. Sat there and study it night and day, day and night all the time to meditate upon it. And God's word is often like that. It redirects. It reorients us.

It puts things in the right perspective. That's where Habakkuk is waiting but watching. Watching for the Lord. It's an interesting way to put it. Watching to see. I'm going to look out to see what he will say. Looking to see what he will say. Those things don't often make sense to us, do they?

Those things seem to contradict one another. How do you look to see what someone's going to say? It's the posture though of the believer, looking to his word, looking to what he will say. And he has said something to us by his son. He spared not his only son. How will he not give you all things? He has spoken. What more can he say than to you he has said to you who for refuge to Jesus have fled?

He has spoken and we look there. We look upon his word, and all of the confusion and concern and perplexity, knowing that the Lord keeps his promise. We can look and wait upon him and worship him while we do so, trusting that the Lord is committed to doing what he said he would do. You remember the way that the Bible ends Jesus making a promise that you have to wait upon and he wants you to fix your heart upon it.

“I am coming soon”. And our words respond back, "Amen, come Lord Jesus."

Conclusion

That's where he leaves us. That's where Habakkuk would drive us - to wait upon the Lord in that kind of way. To watch with our eyes fixed upon his word, where he who promises is faithful. He will surely do it. Amen.