

When God Arrives

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Habakkuk 3:1-15
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Hey, Redeemer family. It's Jon here, one of the pastors. I have a really special guest that I want to introduce to you, today. He's my friend. We met in the doctoral program at Master Seminary. His name is Chopo Mwanza. He is a pastor in Zambia, and he is my friend. Chopo, would you introduce yourself to the people of Redeemer Bible Church?

Hi, everyone. Greetings from Zambia. Chopo Mwanza here. I'm glad to speak to you. You want me to go ahead and introduce myself, say something about myself?

Yeah. Tell them a little bit about yourself, about your ministry, what you do there in Zambia, where you are, and all those things.

Yeah. All right. Lovely. I am based in Kitwe, Zambia, slightly Northwest-ish of the country of Zambia. I pastor of Faith Baptist Church. I am a husband to Cunda, a father to Tionge and Yamikani, and a third one on the way, God willing, in May. I also serve as a faculty member at Central Africa Baptist University. So, so that's who I am, and that's what I do here.

We appreciate your partnership in the Gospel. The church family loved having you here, and hearing from you. This is just a great appreciation of the unique partnership we can have in the Gospel with like-minded brethren, even across the ocean.

Hey, so one other thing I want to let you know about, Chopo, is that back in December, we did a Christmas offering. We didn't tell you, but we included you in that Christmas offering. And so the people of Redeemer Bible Church are excited to give you a check for \$20,000 in order to help you in this church planting ministry that you're doing, training guys, deploying them, send them. I just want to let you know that that this church, that will be watching this, is really behind you, and really wants to bless your ministry.

Amen. Well, I wasn't prepared for that. Awesome, awesome. That would definitely go a long way in, in, in helping and getting the work done here. That's a praise item.

Yeah. Absolutely. We just want you to know that we love you. We're excited about what the Lord is doing, not only in your own life personally, but also what he's doing through your life, all over the country of Zambia. Now, we're hearing even extending into Sudan. These are all places that people have heard about, but probably don't know much about at all, here. To be able to say, "No. I know of effective ministry that's taking place there, and our church is supporting that." I just think that's wonderful. I just wanted to let you know how much our church is behind you and give you the gift from our Christmas offering that our church raised. I love you, my friend, we'll talk soon.

Isn't that amazing? Yeah. Chopo, if you're watching, we love you. I told him to watch. We love you, and we're behind your ministry and all that you're doing. If you want to know more about that interview, because we had to edit that down. When two preachers get together, words feel good in our mouths. If you want to know more about that, we're going to post that this week.

Yeah. Incredible ministry that God's doing through him, there.

Hi, Redeemer family, and hello, the three of you, in our gym. Thank you for being here. Don't forget, hello, microsite on the West side. Isn't that awesome? Hello, all of you.

If you're a guest, I'm Jon, and one of the pastors here. There it is. There is the microsite from last week, 15 people on the West side worshipping together instead of worshipping separately, out there. Lord willing, our prayer is that that'll become a church someday. We'll see what the Lord does. Hello, again, to all of you out there. We love you.

I'm Jon, and one of the pastors, here. Ushers, you guys can come up, right now. They've got programs, and pens, and Bibles. If you don't have any of those, wave to them, they will give you any, or all, of that. As always, you can keep all those things. If you have that pen, and you're going to go to lunch after this, just leave that pen in the little bill thing, and take that other pen and put it in your pocket, and leave. No, just leave it at the waiter station, or whatever. It's cool to actually go to restaurants and see the pen inside those folders. It's awesome. I've seen that before.

I don't know if you heard it, if you got here early enough, but we need to take reservations for Easter. We're asking you to check your email that we send out so that you can reserve your seat. As you see, we kind of need that for parking, and chairs, and all that. There's a link in your email. Check that out. If you don't get an email, put a connect card, your email on there, and they'll take care of you on that.

Open your Bibles to Habakkuk 3, Habakkuk 3. I don't know what page that's on in your Bible, but if you got a Bible from an usher today, that is page 873, Habakkuk 3. As always, if you are able, please stand for the reading of God's word.

Habakkuk 3, drop down, all the way down to verse 1. This is God's word. "A prayer of Habakkuk, the prophet, according to Shigionoth. O, Lord, I've 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. God came from Teman, and the Holy One from Mount Paran. His splendor covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise." We'll stop there. You may be seated. Before we jump into the text, let's pray together.

Father, the text that we're going to look at, today, is a text that is incredibly profound, and incredibly helpful, for the times that we live in, today. Yet, it is a passage that we will miss all of that, if we're not careful, if we're not careful to leave our biases about you at the door, and simply receive the text as it is written. Please help us to do that this morning. Please help us to understand you better because we were here, today. Please do the same thing for all the people at Cornerstone. Please use Pastor Lynn there. Do the same, exact thing, please. Make your truth, make your will, make your ways, your person, your character, make them all known so clearly that people leave Cornerstone, and leave here, more desiring to live for you, and honor you with their lives. Please, Father, that would be evidence of your grace on them, and your grace on us. Please, do these things, I pray, in Jesus' name. Amen.

English Jim was an outlaw in the mid-1800s. He was responsible for a bunch of killings of gold miners, and stealing, and even killed a policeman, and broke out of jail. He was arrested in 1851. Only, the man that they arrested was not him. It was another guy named Thomas Purdue. He had the misfortune of looking and sounding exactly like English Jim. Aside from having a similar face, and both having an Australian accent, Mr. Purdue even had a scar above his left eye, and was missing the tip of his left forefinger, just like English Jim. Even though he pleads with the

authorities that they had the wrong guy, "Ah, yeah. Sure, we do," Purdue was tried and convicted for the crimes of English Jim, and then was sentenced to die.

Thankfully for Purdue, though, English Jim didn't stop committing crimes. He was eventually captured, confessed to all the crimes that Purdue was accused of. He was hung, and Purdue set free. There's another case of mistaken identity that's even worse than that. See, there's a being out there that has the audacity of claiming to be the God of the Bible. This being kind of looks like him and is promoted by many who claim to be speaking for him. The problem is most of the Bible cannot apply to this imposter. It's pretending to be the God of the Bible. It's getting credit for being the God of the Bible, when actually it's a case of mistaken identity. It's getting all the benefits of being God, without actually being God. When you take this God, Habakkuk, you'll find that God doesn't exist in this chapter.

He's not the real God, at all, then. He's a fake, cheap, poor substitute for the real thing. This imposter is identified because this imposter only has one attribute, love. That's it. That's all. In parts of the Bible, like Habakkuk 3, and parts of the Bible that talk about something other than God's love, this imposter is nowhere to be found. What am I talking about? Most American Christians have been raised on a steady diet of God having only one attribute, love. It's not just that there is an imposter that's arisen from kind of nowhere. No. The one true God is being locked in a closet, kept away from the masses because he's repulsive, and modern people won't really like hearing about that God. Let's hide him. Let's up-play these really nice things about him, and let's hide the other stuff that we're kind of embarrassed about. The imposter lives on because people have the audacity of editing God. The result of this, what I call not an overemphasis, but an only emphasis, on God's love is that we have a less than accurate, deformed, tumorous view of God.

We have a view of him that makes large parts of the Bible hard to understand, including the text we're going to see today. If love has been your steady diet, I'm just warning you that your malnourishment is going to make today uncomfortable. You're going to read this text, and you're going to go, "Wait a minute. That's that's not my God. My God would never do that." Your God would be an idol, then. He doesn't exist. The only God that exists is the God that is found here. "Well, wait a minute. God loves me unconditionally. Right? God loves everybody. Right?" We have a God who loves everybody equally. Then we have a God who doesn't care if you ignore him or live for him. Doesn't care if you honor him or blaspheme him. Doesn't care if you love him or hate him. None of that matters. Why? "Because, he loves me."

This truth came home to me when I was a high school teacher. One of my students in class, we'll call him Micah, because that was his name. Micah drew me a picture of him partying, and across the top of the page was, "God loves me." Translation, I can do whatever I want because God loves me. I think it's safe to say that the God of the Bible is dead when it comes to the thinking of most in our culture, whether they call themselves Christians or not. Today, I hope God's word resurrects a more biblical view for each of us here, today. Here's the thing, "What you think about God is the most important thing about you." A. W. Tozer said that, and he's right. We need an accurate view of God, especially as the world around us is changing so much. We need pillars in our hearts. We need things to hold onto. We need anchors. We need God to be the rock that keeps us stable no matter what shifts and changes around us.

When God is the God of the Bible, your life will make more sense. Your world will make more sense. Your view of things won't be clouded with error and bias when God is as clear as he can

be. This clarity will be gained from Habakkuk 3, which is a graphic portrayal of what it's like when God arrives, when God steps on the scene of history, when the veil between this world and God's world is crossed, when that veil falls and God stands face-to-face with all who oppose him and oppress his people. Today, that world is hidden from us, but it will not be hidden from us forever. One day, everything will be clear.

Habakkuk has been our teacher. To set the context before we jump into Chapter 3, God had become very confusing to him. He's seeing all the evil, and all the lies, and injustice, all around him, and there are no repercussions for it. The wrong is getting stronger, and truth is being overpowered. Evil is winning, and in all of that, God wasn't making sense for Habakkuk anymore. He cries out to God for answers. "I don't understand. Can you fill me in on this?" Unlike you and me, who aren't prophets, God actually showed up. God said to him, "I see all the evil that you see, and I'm going to punish that evil. I'm going to use the Babylonian army to punish my people for their wickedness." Now, Habakkuk is even more confused. "Wait a minute, God. You're holy. How can you use this unholy people, called the Babylonians, to punish a less unholy people like us?" God answers that, too. We saw that last weekend.

His response was, "I'm good. I'm just. I always do what's right. It's right for me to punish sins. Here's what I'm going to do. I'm going to use the Babylonians to punish my people, the Jews. Then, I'm going to punish the Babylonians for their sins, too. Nobody gets off. Nobody is freed from their rebellion. I stay the same. Because I stay the same, Habakkuk, you can trust me." Faith is trusting God to be consistent with his character, and consistent with his actions. Actions that he's done in the past, that consistency, that anchor, that rock, then becomes what we can hold onto in the present, and in the future, regardless of what happens. Chapter 3 is a prayer. You see that in verse 1, but this prayer is written in the form of a poem.

Habakkuk, here, has been exposed to all of God's responses to his questions in Chapters 1 and 2. He realizes, "I have no more questions. All I can do now is worship." It's a song of worship about trust in God, based, not on our circumstances or on our feelings, but based on God's character, and God's actions in the past, and how those actions can impact today and the future. The chapter starts by saying, "We're reading a prayer," verse 1, "a prayer of Habakkuk, the prophet, according to the Shigionoth." This prayer was to be sung. This is a worship song. This song was meant to help the faithful remnant trust in God while they're waiting for the inevitable battle, destruction, exile, and enslavement. God's saying, "That's coming. Even though that's coming for you, faithful remnant, trust me in the present."

Living faithful in a nation under God's judgment means worshiping that same God when times are the worst. That's the most truest expression of faith. It rises above the circumstances. It can sit in the worst of jails, in the worst solitary confinement, and still worship because God doesn't change when everything else does. This shows our hope is in him, and in nothing that is here. By the way, no one is sure what "according to Shigionoth" mean, aren't you glad he didn't say that publicly. That's right. It might mean loud, or triumphant and passionate. It may be the name of the melody that these words were to be sung to. Now, we're going to come back to the prayer in a minute in verse 2, but I want to start with this song today, verses 3-7.

He's looking back to the past, and specifically, he's looking back to when God rescued his people from Egyptian slavery. He's remembering the Exodus. He's remembering this truth in order to settle the hearts of those who are faithful to him. This event becomes hooks that they can hang their trust on in the dark days ahead. Let's hear this song starting in verse 3. "God came from

Teman, and the Holy One from Mount Paran. His splendor covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise. His brightness was like the light. Rays flashed from his hand, and, there, he veiled his power." If you're not familiar with those geographical indicators, what Habakkuk is describing is God starting out around the area of Mount Sinai, moving southeast, or southwest, underneath Jerusalem, and then down into Egypt. This is God's movement into Egypt before he frees his people from slavery.

Notice verse 3, he is called "the Holy One." This fact must be kept in mind, no matter what's going on, God hates sin. He's separate from evil. He's the epitome of purity. He will maintain justice, and truth, and righteousness in the world because he's the judge of all the earth. Notice those words, splendor and brightness, and rays flashing. Splendor refers to God's kingly authority, that he's in charge. That authority's on display for all to see. You see that right? That people see it, and they stand in awe. Creation is worshiping him. His radiance is just permeating all of creation. Notice verse 4. Light is coming from his hands. His hands are a picture of his action. The idea there is that his actions will be so glorious and amazing, people will just stand in awe, and respect, and wonder, and fear, which is exactly what happens in the Exodus account.

His actions caused that, but notice verse 3, where it says, "And, there, he veiled his power." All of that amazing stuff that happened in the Exodus that's just the edges of his power. That's just a small fraction. He's doing this with one hand tied behind his back. Now, the first indication that the text gives us that the light being spoken of, here, is more like nuclear blasts than cool summer day, is in verse 5. "Before him went pestilence, and plague followed at his heels. He stood and measured the earth. He looked and shook the nations. The eternal mountains were scattered. The eternal hills sank low. His were the everlasting ways. I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction. The curtains of the land of Midian did tremble.

Verse 5 remembers the 10 plagues. Right? These 10 plagues, these are not two gods. These are personified members of God's royal entourage. As God is marching into Egypt, before him is pestilence, and behind him is plague. The idea there is that pestilence is his shield bearer, and the plagues are his servant. He's bringing judgment to Egypt. He's coming because of their rebellion in the way that they mistreated his people. Notice verse 6, God is assessing the situation. He's evaluating everything he sees. He's seeing, "Is this living up to my will? Is this the way I want it to be?" He can do that. He has the prerogative to do that. He is in charge as our creator. Notice his gaze, verse 6. At his gaze, the nations what? "Dude, that's God. Amazing. Right?" Is that what the nations are doing? They shake. They tremble. The self-confidence of those who oppose him, and oppress his people, utterly collapses when he shows up. He has arrived to enforce his will, to establish what's right, and to punish evil. Notice the mountains and the hills. Pictures of grandeur and permanence. Right? The hills that we see out here every day, those mountains, are the same exact mountains that people saw 100 years ago, 1,000 years ago, 2,000 years ago. They were looking at the same exact mountains. They're pictures of permanence and grandeur, but notice what they do when God arrives. You see those words. They shatter. They're not that permanent. They prostrate themselves under... "The eternal hills sank low." They bow down before him. He's eternal. They're not. Notice verse 6, "His ways are the everlasting ways." All who oppose him, and oppose his people, are opposing reality. Why? The way he does things is what's eternal. Nothing else is. No kingdom, no person, no mountain is eternal.

The result, verse 7. All who were against him. Cushan and Midian were early Bedouin tribes that attacked the Jews as they were leaving Egypt. Even then, notice, those who were against him will be afflicted, and tremble when he arrives. In contrast, the sappy, sentimentalized,

therapeutic, neutered, imposter of modern America. It would be good for us, as we consider God, to admit God is terrifying. Point #1) **Admit God is terrifying**. When was the last time you wrote that down in a sermon? Verse 6, the mountains run away from him. The hills fall on their face before him. If mountains do that, what do you think people will do, before him? When God spoke to the people at Mount Sinai, Book of Exodus, after he's rescued them, and brought them to himself to make a covenant with them, when he speaks to them, they are terrified. Exodus 19:16, "All the people trembled with fear when God arrived at Sinai." When Isaiah sees God, Isaiah 6, he says, "Woe," but not, "That's awesome." But, "Woe is me." He pronounces a curse on himself. Why? Because, he sees the Lord.

This is New Testament, too, by the way. Read Luke 5 later today. Miraculous catch of fish. Right? Common story. Jesus, "Throw your nets on the other side." All the expert fishermen are, "Okay, fine. Whatever, Jesus." "Throw it on the other side." Miraculous catch of fish. Peter's response in Luke 5:8 is so telling. It says that, "He fell at Jesus' knees saying, 'Let's start a small business. Do that every day, and we'll be rich.' Fell on his knees, saying, 'Depart from me for I am a sinful man, O, Lord.'" "O, Lord. Get away from me. You did something only God can do. I just realized who you really are, and I'm in trouble."

John was called the disciple Jesus loved. Right? If you didn't know that, when we get to John, eventually, that's what we'll find. He was Jesus' closest friend, in other words. In Revelation 1:17, when he saw Jesus, he, "Fell at his feet as though dead." How can that be the God of the Bible? I mean, you think he's the last person to be afraid of, if you're a modern American listening to common preaching, today. I mean, why do you think God would say, Exodus 33:20, human beings, "shall not see me, and live?" Why do you think he says that? Your mind might flash all kinds of reasons, but the bottom line the reason he says that is because it's true. A true picture of God, an accurate picture of him, is intimidating. It's terrifying. Here's the complete disconnect. If we sent out invitations, and people believe those invitations that said, "God is going to be here, today." This place would be overrun with people. "I want to see God. He's going to be there. Great." They would have no sense, at all, that they should be terrified, and stay a million miles from this place.

What does that mean for faithful people living in a nation under God's judgment? Well, as you look out at all the practical atheism, all the living, "God doesn't exist," that's going on right now. If those people aren't going to be terrified for God, then maybe we should try to be terrified for them. We should pray for them that God would open their eyes to who he really is. That he is real. That he is alive. That he hates rebellion. And because they don't know him, they're not terrified by him. And they're not terrified by him because they don't really believe that their sin is all that bad. And because they don't really believe their sin is all that bad, then, they really don't understand the truth about them. The truth about them is that they are God's enemies, and he is on the war path against every last one of them.

Don't believe me? Look at verse 8. "Was your wrath against the rivers, O, Lord? Was your anger against the rivers, and your indignation against the sea? When you attacked the red sea, and you parted the Jordan River as your people went in to conquer the land? When you rode on your horses and on your chariot of salvation, you stripped the sheath from your bow, calling for many arrows." It doesn't take a rocket scientist to see bows and arrows, horses, and chariots. God's not on his way to a picnic. This is war. This is military imagery.

The Lord, notice, the covenant keeping, faithful Yahweh's pictured here as a warrior, weapons ready, marching triumphantly into battle against all who oppose him, and all who oppress his people. Again, creation is helpless. It's paralyzed at the sheer weight, not of just God showing up, but what he's there to do, which is exact vengeance. Look at the end of verse 9. "You split the earth with rivers. The mountains saw you and writhed. The raging waters, swept on. The deep, gave forth its voice. It lifted its hands on high." The idea there is that it's lifting its hands in surrender. "Oh, no." Creation does that. People do not. Habakkuk is remembering what God did to the Egyptians. What God did to them 800 years earlier was, then, to give him hope that God would help, and save, and rescue his people from the Babylonians, too.

You see, God swore an oath to defend his people. Not only did he say, Genesis 12, "I'll bless those who bless you, and curse those who curse you." He goes one step beyond that. Listen to Deuteronomy 32:40 and try to imagine the God of modern Christianity saying these words. God speaking, "I lift up my hand to heaven, and swear, as I live forever, if I sharpen my flashing sword, and my hand takes hold on judgment, I will take vengeance on my adversaries. I will repay those who hate me. I will make my arrows drunk with blood. My sword shall devour flesh with the blood of the slain and the captives from the long-haired heads of the enemy." Then the response of the people, "Rejoice with him, O, heavens. Bow down to him all gods, for he avenges the blood of his children, and takes vengeance on his adversaries. He repays those who hate him and cleanses his people's land."

God of the Bible has weapons. They're ready for battle. He is a God who cannot lose. All who oppose him, all who spend their time on what he says is evil and unjust, all who spread lies as truth, all who take advantage of people, who are above the law, who treat people like animals, and encourage rebellion. This text is saying, "Take heed." Verse 12, "You march through the earth in fury. You threshed the nations in anger. You went out for the salvation of your people, for the salvation of your anointed." So all of verses 3-11, this march, on the way to Egypt, was to save his people, to rescue them from a nation that was opposing him and oppressing them. A nation that was treating the commands coming through Moses like they could just be disregarded with no consequence, discarded like the trash, throwing his people into jail, oppressing them persecuting them. "Oh," it's, "you can have your day. Enjoy it. Live it up because when God brings it to an end, it's not going to be pretty."

Verse 13, "You crushed the head of the house of the wicked, laying him bear from thigh to neck. You pierced, with his own arrows, the heads of his warriors. You caused the warriors to start fighting themselves." These warriors who came like a whirlwind to scatter Habakkuk and his people, rejoicing as if to devour the poor in secret. They're excited as they go in to devour people, and God saying, "You crushed them." "You trampled the sea." Sea and waters, here, often is a picture of people, massive groups, nations. "You trampled the sea." You trampled the nations with your horses, the surging of mighty waters. God uses nations to do his bidding here on earth.

As the judge of all the earth, he will ultimately deal with every nation, and all of their leaders, based on two things. "Were they faithful to my word? How did they treat my people?" Once again, in contrast to this weak, pathetic, Hallmark Channel version, imposter God, modern Christians need to point #2) **Accept God is a warrior. Need to accept God is a warrior, accept and embrace it.** Don't push it away. "No, no, that's not. My God would never do that." Again, if you believe that, your god is an idol. It's not the one true God. Point one, terrifying. Point two, warrior. Not exactly two ideas that are going to make it into the next Christian greeting card.

Right? Imagine that, getting that card, "Be terrified to stand before God, the warrior. Have a nice day."

Listen, God fights for what's right. He fights for the truth. He fights for all of those on the side of his truth, which means he's at war against all those who oppose him, who sin against him, who promote evil as good, and harm his people. While we might look out at the world, and go, "Wait, it just seems like things are going from bad to worse." That doesn't mean that God is not active. It doesn't mean he doesn't know. Warrior is used 52 times in the ESV. Mostly it talks about human armies. Listen, though, to Jeremiah 20:11, "The Lord is with me as a dreaded warrior." He's not just one of the guys in the army. He's the Navy SEAL. He's the ninja. He's the samurai. He's the Legolas. He's like Darth Vader, all rolled into one, can kill everybody, like that.

His presence on the battlefield strikes terror in all who would be stupid enough to oppose him and try to take on the one who is undefeatable. Here's another passage. Listen to Revelation 19. Try to guess who's being described here. "Then I saw heaven open, and behold, a white horse. The one sitting on it is called faithful and true. In righteousness, he judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire. On his head are many diadems. He has a name written, that no one knows, but himself. He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood. The name by which he is called is the word of God. From his mouth comes a sharp sword, with which to strike down the nations. He will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the wine press of the fury of the wrath of God, the almighty. On his robe and on his thigh, he has a name written, King of Kings, the Lord of Lords." Who is that? What's the answer to every question in church?

So Jesus isn't this, this happy, little hippie, running around with butterflies in his hair, and love, love, love all the time? Can we just be done with this imposter of the one true God? You should get back to the basics about him. He's not your homeboy. He's the creator of heaven and earth. You are his creation. He owns you. You belong to him. All nations belong to him. He is holy. He has a standard that he holds every single person, and every single nation, too. He will enforce that standard as law on the world. Whether we like it or not, whether we agree with it or not, doesn't really matter. Who said, "Reality doesn't care about your feelings?"

God doing that, by the way, is his goodness. It's his justice. He must do what is right, which means he must punish all crimes against him. High-handed, arrogant rebellion will not be tolerated, just like we don't tolerate it. Right? We don't tolerate it from our kids if we have them. We don't tolerate it from our employees if we have those. We don't take that from our co-workers. We don't take high-handed rebellion from anybody. "Oh, not. God's going to. He doesn't really care. He just loves you unconditionally." We've broken thousands and thousands of his rules, making us his sworn enemy. We don't love God. We hate him. He's not some foolish, half senile, sneak stuff past him when he's not looking, practically blind, old man upstairs, watching reruns of Happy Days. That's not what he's doing. He's a fighter. He's a warrior. He cares deeply about rebellion against him, though, he may be slow in his response. As we might look out and go, "Why is this happening?" Never think that his slowness is indifference, or a lack of attention. Consider his slowness as mercy because that's what it is.

That's what Habakkuk desperately prays for. Look back at verse 2. "O, Lord, I have heard the report of you and your work, O, Lord, do I fear." I know what you did in the past, and because of what you did in the past, I fear you. I respect you. I recognize who you are. "In the midst of the years," meaning in-between, when you made these prophecies about our destruction, and when they actually happen. "In the midst of the years, revive that work." In the midst of the years. In

this time in-between prophecy and fulfillment, when you tell us what's going to happen to us, and before it happens, make your will, make your ways known to more people. "In wrath remember mercy."

If you followed Habakkuk in prayers, in this book, they've gone from, "Are you going to do anything about all of this sin," to, "How can you do that in response to sin," to "God have mercy on us for our sin." This isn't passive resignation. Notice the repeated, "O, Lord, O Lord." This is deep emotion. He is moved deeply as he's contemplating the past, and all that God did, there, in light of the present need that they have for God.

He hopes God will do, now, what he did in the past, when his people were oppressed. Then in Egypt, he rescued them, even though they were sinful then, too. He says, "God, you did that in the past. Would you do it again?" The God who acted in the past, on behalf of his people, to save them from their enemies, whose work was so thorough and so awesome, Habakkuk says, "God, it was so terrifying, and so worthy of respect. Oh, God, do it again. Revive it. Do the same thing so that we can all see it. Only, instead of something we heard about with the Egyptians, do it so we can see it with the Babylonians."

Asking for mercy, like verse 2, is an admission of what? It's an admission that I need mercy. Right? That sin has taken place. So Habakkuk is saying here, "God, you've been right to be angry at our rebellion. You're right in that we've disregarded your rules. We've dishonored your name. You have the right to punish us. It's right, and good, and justified. We sinned against you. Your punishment, it's good. We own it. It's right." "In the days between the prophecy and our punishment, and when you fulfill the punishment of the Babylonians, in those days, in the middle of those days, be merciful to us. Show us mercy. Remember mercy. Temper your anger with compassion. The righteous who are right with you by faith, yeah, we're going to live. We're going to be preserved. We're going to go into exile in Babylon. We're going to be protected through this horrible ordeal. My God, as we go help us to trust you. This is going to be hard. It's going to be hard to go through this. It's going to be hard to face the destruction, and the enslavement. It's going to be hard. Help us to trust you. In your wrath, remember mercy."

Listen, no one, in their right mind, wants to face God as warrior. Instead, point #3) ***Ask God for mercy. Ask God for mercy.*** Now, mercy makes sense. Now, the love of God makes sense. Mercy makes no sense until we first understand God is a terrifying warrior. Once we know that, once we see God for who he truly is, we recognize, "Wait a minute..." I mean, this is not even spiritual, this is just rational. The only smart thing to do is to beg him for mercy. Cry out to him, forgiveness. Right? Look, again, at what he does to the wicked, with me. Verse 13, "You crushed the head of the house of the wicked." You dropped a boulder on their head so that it splat. Then, just for a good measure, you filleted him from his neck to his thighs. This is a picture of, "You have no chance against this God." He did this, why? Verse 13, to protect his people. "You went out for battle for the salvation of your people." For those who are his, after punishment, he shows them mercy. As you think through all of this, what we realize is salvation is really salvation from him, from meeting him as terrifying warrior.

The God of the Bible is full of mercy. Daniel 9:9, "To the Lord, our God, belongs mercy and forgiveness." Ephesians 2:4 says, the same warrior God, "is rich in mercy." He's not miserly with mercy. "I don't have very much, I can only give a little bit out, but no more." He is rich in mercy. All of the things that would terrify us because of things that we have done with our lives, he says, "I've got more mercy than anything you've ever done. I'm rich in it." He shows mercy by

not allowing us to face him as a fighter, but to face him as our father. I Peter, 1:3, "Blessed be the God and father of our Lord, Jesus Christ. According to his great mercy, he's caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. He's born again to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who were once his enemies, but are now his children. That only happens in Christ. That only happens in Jesus.

Question, have you believed in him, yet? Has the picture of God coming for you with, verse 8, wrath, anger, and indignation, and verse 12, fury for each one of your sins, has that moved your heart at all? Has the picture of God coming for you, verse 9, with his weapons ready, his bow tense, his arrows on target, ready to fire with perfect precision to hit the death mark, has any of that affected you, at all? Has the picture of God in verse 13, crushing the head of his enemy and filleting them. Has any of that affected you, or is it, "Ah, it's not true. Whatever." Has any of that caused you to say, "You know what? I need mercy. I need mercy. I need to ask God for mercy. I need to confess my sins because when I do, he will forgive them, and he will cleanse me from all unrighteousness. I need to give my life to Christ. I need to trust in him."

Listen, that should be our response to what we read here. It should be. In the end, mercy is only found in Jesus because God, the warrior, put his weapons down, and became a baby in Bethlehem. When Jesus talked about why he did that, he said, Luke 19:10, "The son of man, which is him." That he said, "I came to seek and to save the lost." This is what he's been doing for 2,000 years and is still doing to this day. Listen, one day he will put his weapons back on, and he will do Habakkuk 3, only this time he will do it to the whole earth. My question is, "What side will you be on?"

While we live in a nation under God's judgment, we're trusting Jesus, regardless of the outcome, because of who he is. Yes. Because of who he is, we know justice will be done. We just don't know when. We trust him. We don't only trust him. Chapter 3 of Habakkuk shows us that we go beyond trusting him to worshiping him, or we worship him because we trust him. That even in the darkest of days, he can carry us through because of who he is for his people. I mean, I can imagine being in jail for being a Christian, reading Habakkuk 3, and finding comfort, encouragement, and strength to keep being faithful, no matter what. Listen, Christian, don't we have more than Habakkuk 3? Don't we have the end of every Gospel? Don't we have the cross? Don't we have what God did there? Regardless of how bad it gets, don't we have Christ? We don't have pictures, or ideas, of God in the past, that did this great redemption from Egypt. No. We have Christ who redeemed us from all sin.

The forces of evil may be growing stronger and stronger every day, but the same God who fought for his people in Sinai, who punished the Babylonians for their evil, and who won a decisive victory on the cross, is at work behind the scenes, now. He will bring about his will in his time. We trust him. We rest in who he is, what we know he's done already, and what he's promised to do in the future. There's hope. There's hope he will forgive wicked nations, that repent before him, like he did to the Ninevites, and like he does for all who will believe in Christ. This is the one true God. It is only this God, not some imposter, that we can worship, no matter what. Let's pray.

Father, it may not be looking out at the nations and the things going on in the world, and wondering, "What in the world is going on? How can this stuff be? And, God, when are you going to show up?" It might be trials happening in our lives, right now. Talking about the dark

days ahead, in the future, may be small compared to the dark days being faced, now, at work or at home. No matter what we're facing, take these truths, please. Help us to live, each one of us, live in light of them so that no matter what we're facing, we can worship you in the suffering, not just when you relieve us from it. Do that please, for the glory of your name. Amen.