

TARRY

Speaker: Rev. Dr. Cecil Clements

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Scripture: Habakkuk 2:1-3

Habakkuk 2:1-3

*"I will stand on my guard post
And station myself on the rampart;
And I will keep watch to see what He will speak to me,
And how I may reply when I am reproved.
² Then the LORD answered me and said,
"Record the vision
And inscribe it on tablets,
That the one who reads it may run.
³ "For the vision is yet for the appointed time;
It hastens toward the goal and it will not fail. Though it tarries, wait for it;
For it will certainly come, it will not delay."
Though it tarries wait for it, for it will certainly come, it will not delay.*

Our Heavenly Father, speak to us, Lord. through this passage. Through Your Holy Spirit, would You open our understanding that we may be able to grasp what you have for us today. And Lord, as we understand it, help us to just glorify Your Son through our understanding of this text, and it's always in His Name that we pray. Amen.

The prophet Habakkuk says, *"I will stand on my guard post, and station myself on the rampart; and I will keep watch."* I will place myself in the right position, *and then I will wait for Him to speak to me*, talking of course of the Lord to speak to him. Then he says, "I'm ready to listen. I've brought myself into this place of isolation. I'm all by myself on a watchtower, ready to hear from the Lord.

Then he says, *how I may reply when I am reproved*. It's like he's already set himself up to be reproved. In other words, he feels that he has done something that will bring reproof upon him from the Lord. What has he done? He says in 1:2-4,

*"How long, O LORD, will I call for help,
And You will not hear?
I cry out to You, "Violence!"
Yet You do not save.
³ Why do You make me see iniquity,
And cause me to look on wickedness?
Yes, destruction and violence are before me;
Strife exists and contention arises.
⁴ Therefore the law is ignored
And justice is never upheld.
For the wicked surround the righteous;
Therefore justice comes out perverted."*

This is what he said to the Lord. He says, "How long must I stand in the midst of all of this wickedness? Remember, Habakkuk was a contemporary of Jeremiah, and Jeremiah was the one who spoke for 40 long years, speaking into the children of Israel's ears, asking them to repent, to turn away from the evil that they had embraced. And except for a brief part when Hilkiah found the book

of the law and gave it to Josiah, and for 13 years they followed it. That was all it was; they went back to their wicked ways after his death. So Habakkuk stands in the midst of all this evil and depravity, and he says: how long is this going to be?

But the Lord's answer to him brings even greater consternation for him. Because the Lord says: "I'm not going to let this evil go. In fact, I'm going to bring the Chaldeans who will then overtake Jerusalem." And Habakkuk is aghast. He says: "Lord, how can you do that? The Chaldeans are an evil people. The Babylonians – they are so evil. How can you use evil to come and punish evil?" Then suddenly he's standing there and he says, "Lord, I've said all of this. What is my role? I don't know what my role is but I'm ready to be reproved by You. You show me what I need to understand from all of this."

Then in 2:2, the Lord says to him:

*Then the LORD answered me and said,
"Record the vision
And inscribe it on tablets,
That the one who reads it may run.
³For the vision is yet for the appointed time;
It hastens toward the goal and it will not fail.
Though it tarries, wait for it;
For it will certainly come, it will not delay."*

He says: God says to him, "I have a plan. I have a purpose. I know what I'm doing. In fact, it is so strong that you can inscribe it on a tablet. That's the surety with which I am speaking to you. However, the time is not yet now. So tarry, wait a while."

Five things actually God says to Habakkuk in the midst of all of this.

1. Write it down. it's a sure word; it will come true.
2. There is an appointed time for it.
3. It will not fail.
4. It will tarry
5. You will have to wait for it.

When I was reading this, I stopped and thought: This fits very much with our own lives right now. Look at all that is going on in the world around us – we see so much of evil. There's a prevalence of evil all around. Good is being overcome with evil. In fact, people who name the name of our God don't listen to the Word of God; which was the same then. The children of Israel were consecrated. They were taken and carved out of a huge populace as children of God belonging to Yahweh. And yet, Yahweh was the farthest from their minds.

So we look at this situation that we are in and we too can ask the question: Lord, how long? How long will this keep going on? Today, you cannot even tell the difference between truth and falsehood. It's impossible with all that's available in AI now. That's gone out the window. And it seems like speaking and saying things has lost its meaning. The only thing that is left for followers of Jesus is to act like followers of Jesus.

Sheila and I used to sing a song many years ago that said, "Your life is the only Bible some people read." It seems like we've exhausted the ability to read from this book and say anything. It's going to be our lives rather than what we say or who we call ourselves that will establish us as disciples of the most High God.

As we ask the question: Lord, how long will this go on? Maybe today the answer that we have from God is to tarry, to wait. God is going to do something, just as He said He was going to do in the time of Habakkuk. And we know that. We know that there is going to be a judgment day. But what about now? What about the situations that you and I face? The specific situations that accost us?

It could be that today you're thinking about marriage maybe, and it's been on your mind for a long time. You're saying, "Lord, I'm waiting and waiting. But Lord, nothing seems to be happening." Or maybe you're thinking about parenthood. Or maybe you've been thinking of a job; a new job or going to a new location. You're wondering and saying, "Lord, how long should I wait in this position? I'm tired. It seems like I'm just treading water. How long?"

A couple of days back, I was putting together our sermon for today, and God just gave me the word "Tarry". Normally, I have passages of scripture that I work with and extrapolate, and then come up with the sermon. This time I just had this one word – Tarry. I felt that the Lord wanted that very specifically for some of you here in the congregation. Tarry, to wait. I started to do some research and see where it fit in, and then landed up in Habakkuk. But tarry is used almost over 50 times in the Bible in different stages.

Tarry, wait – and it always has a sense that you seem ready to jump into something that is not of the Lord, and to be careful not to do that. Because getting into something that is not from the Lord could be the worst thing that you got into, because God is not in it. So the word tarry seems to be so very strong for me today, that there are some of you who are right there in that place, and the word for you is tarry, wait. In the midst of all that is going on around you, all that you're going through, and you ask, "Lord, how long am I going to be in this place?" Maybe the Lord's word for you is: Just a little more. There's an appointed time. Don't rush it.

But the word is true. As He said to Habakkuk: You can inscribe it on stone. It's true; it will not fail. We are not good at tarrying. Tarrying is something that we have a tough time with. I see smiles all across. We are a microwave generation; we want it yesterday. We don't like to wait for anything. So, sometimes we don't even know – even as I tarry, what do I do? There's a knee-jerk reaction when we say: Okay God, if this is what You want, then I'll wait and curl up in a corner. When You're ready, let me know; until then, I'll just tread water.

But that's not tarrying. G. Campbell Morgan had a wonderful quote. He said, "Waiting for God is not about laziness." In other words, it's not about finding a hole and sitting in it and saying, "When You're ready Lord, then You let me know. Till then, I'll do nothing." That's not tarrying. That's not waiting on the Lord.

How do we live our lives in the tarry mode?

When we look at the will of God, and we have His general will and then His specific will. His general will is something that we do continuously. We don't need to be prompted about it. For example, we're called to be 'salt and light'. We don't need moments to be told – today I want you to be salt and light. That's what we ought to be doing. *Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify My Father.* Our light should shine – that's God's general will for us.

Then there's the specific will which has to do with each one of us, particular plans that God has for us. That is the one we are called to tarry on, because that is where we sometimes jump the gun and say, "I'm tired of waiting for this particular thing to happen, to change, to open in my life. I think I've got it figured out and now I'm going to do what I think should be done." And today, to that specific will with some of you, it could be that God is saying, "I want you to tarry. I want you to wait."

Take a cocoon. Inside it there's activity that is happening. It's not just sitting there. It may look like the cocoon is not doing anything. But inside, a larva is being metamorphosed into a butterfly. And if you happen to break that cocoon before it is ready, out will flop a butterfly that cannot fly. The nature of the wings of a butterfly is that it has to break the cocoon by itself; that's what strengthens the wings so that it can fly. It's the same thing with us when we try and help God a little and say, "Lord, let me just take a few hundred yards first, and then You can catch up with me." We tend to somehow break down His plan for us. It's not the full plan anymore. And 99% of God's plan is not His plan. It has to be 100%.

Maybe today, that's what the Lord is asking of you. "I want you to wait, but I want it to be dynamic waiting. Don't just curl up at home and say, 'I'm going to wait till God opens the door.'" But do the rest of the things that are part of who you and I ought to be as Christians. The general will of God. Be to your neighbors what a Christian neighbor should be. Follow holiness, live sinless lives, invite more of the Holy Spirit in your life. Look out for neighbors or people who need help. Do all that needs to be done under the general will of God for us. Look at your life and say: I've got to make this beautiful while I wait for God to show me what He wants to do in me.

I'm always reminded of this story I read many years back, about two men who were in a hospital on either side of a room, on two beds. One bed though, had a window next to it, and every morning they both would wake up. The man without the window would just lie in bed and the one next to the window would sit up and look out the window. He would say: oh, today the sun is rising and I can see the people on the streets beginning to start moving around. The newspaper man is out; so are the milkmen. Now the sun is climbing; it's noon and it's getting hotter out there. Then as evening came, the ultraviolet rays of the sun are now coming in. The sun is beginning to set and people are starting to go home. Day in and day out, he would tell his other friend, who was just so tired. He would wake up and lie in bed, thinking: All I do is lie in bed here, unable to do anything.

One day, the man near the window died. The man on the other side couldn't wait to take his place. The moment they moved the body out of the room, he told the nurse: I want to get that bed. So, they moved him and with great excitement, he sat up and looked out the window. To his horror, he found that there was just a blank wall of a building right across. Every day his neighbor would create stories to make it exciting for him. He saw nothing but the blank wall, but he did something active. With even the mundane thing that he saw, to help somebody else.

Tarrying is hard work, beloved. Maybe God is speaking to some of you here and saying, "I want you to wait." Maybe you're wondering what to do in the interim, and I have shown you a couple of things that can be done. But the key here is to wait. God has your back. God has the best plan and purpose that you can ever hope to see or accomplish in your life. And He's waiting to fulfill it.

Tarry is the word for some of you this morning. I found scriptures that are just an encouragement for us. I also found a hymn; the language may be archaic, but it's so beautiful.

Lord, we know that Thou are near us,
Though Thou seem'st to hide Thy face;
And are sure that Thou dost hear us,
Though no answer we embrace.

Not one promise shall miscarry,
Not one blessing come too late.
Though the vision long may tarry;
Give us patience, Lord, to wait.

Beloved, the word I have for us this morning is just that. It is to tarry. Maybe you're weary today. You're tired. It's been a long haul and you're saying: "I'm beginning to think that I should take back the reins from God. I'll just start charting my own course." I would plead with you: Don't do that. God still has the best plan for your life. And if the word tarry is sitting squarely upon your heart, then just tell Him, "Lord, I'm going to tarry."

Beloved, here's how I want to end our sermon before the worship team comes back on again. I feel that I need to read scriptures over you – verses from the Bible over some of you for whom the word tarry is something that God has spoken to you today. And if that's the case, if you came in here and during the course of this message, you're saying, "That's me. I was ready to jump in, do my thing. But I've heard God speaking to me, and I'm going to tarry." Then I want to read scripture over you. I'm going to invite you to stand where you are. I'm going to speak these scriptures over you that they may be a source of encouragement to you.

Psalm 27:14

Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart. wait, I say, on the Lord.

Psalm 40:1-2

I waited patiently for the Lord, and He inclined unto me, and heard my cry. (God hears you. How long O Lord has reached His ear) He brought me up also out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings.

Job

All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change comes.

Lamentations 3:25

The Lord is good unto them that wait for Him, to the soul that seeks Him.

Ecclesiastes 3:11

He hath made everything good in His time.

Isaiah

They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint.

Soak into those words beloved, take them into your heart. You will run, you will not be weary. You will not faint because when the Lord says, "Wait!" He will sustain you right to the point when He births the new plan. That's the way He works. He will sustain you. "Wait on the Lord. be of good courage and He will strengthen your heart."

Amen.
