

Wait for It

Habakkuk 2:1-4

“I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reprov'd. And the LORD answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make *it* plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. For the vision *is* yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: Though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry. Behold, his soul *which* is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith.”

How do you kill an idea?

That was the question posed by Margaret Brennanⁱ, (a CBS News correspondent) on Friday morning on CBSN News. The discussion centered on the horrible slaughter of 84 victims in Nice, France. Mohamed Lahouaiej-Bouhlel killed his victims with a semi-truck and trailer as they returned from a July 14, Bastille Day fireworks display. Since that interview, the Islamic State (ISIS) has claimed the killer as its “soldier.” As the correspondents agonized over these events, their pain was evident. They raised crucial questions:

- If a lone terrorist can use a truck to kill 84 people, including 10 children, how do you guard against this? Trucks are an essential part of everyday life. If that can be turned into a weapon, how is there to be any security in society?
- To their credit, the correspondents began to inquire about the murderer’s motives. That’s when Margaret Brennan asked, “*How do you kill an idea?*” She went on to point to the ideology that has driven so many recent Islamic killers to wreak havoc in society. She lamented that no one has come up with a genuine way to overturn these evil ideas and ideologies. I would remind you that these martyr assassins have been taught that they will enter heaven as the reward for their dark deedsⁱⁱ. How do you kill such an idea before that idea kills many more?

God’s Word, the Holy Scriptures, addresses that question. We have powerful weapons in the war of ideas. As the Apostle Paul wrote to the church of Corinth in 2 Corinthians 10:3-6:

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh (for the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; and having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

Without using physical violence (for the weapons of our warfare are not fleshly), we can be “mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds, casting down imaginations [including ideas and ideologies] and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God.” This occurs through the preaching of Christ, the Mighty Conqueror, for the just shall live by faith in Him.

As we have learned in our recent study, the prophet Habakkuk was heavily burdened by the violence in his society as well (1:2-4). Society seemed to be tearing apart at the seams. Does this sound familiar to you? In a terrifying application of the principle of “sowing and reaping,” the Lord promised to reward the violence of Judah with the more brutal violence of the Chaldeans (Babylonians) (1:5-11). In his troubled prayer of 1:12-17, Habakkuk lamented that he did not understand God. What should you do when the God you know does not respond like the God you know? When mass murderers seem to have free reign to use their bombs and semi-trucks, people are treated like something less than human beings (1:14-17). Habakkuk lamented that people were like fish in the sea. What should you do when you feel like a fish in the sea in a strange and turbulent society?

On one occasion, I was with my father in a boat in the bay on the north side of Santa Rosa Island near Pensacola. My dad, who made his own fishing nets, was fishing with his net. We were accustomed to catching mullet and puffer fish. But that day, he brought up a tiny seahorse. We had seen them in aquariums, but we had never caught one before. Seahorses are fascinating fish. They are not equipped to swim fast and far. No, they use their tails to latch on to something solid (like underwater plants) and wait for their food to swim by. In those funny fish, I think we can see an illustration of Habakkuk, whose name means “embrace.” In times like these, we need to embrace God – by faith --- taking hold of God in these turbulent times (Isaiah 64:6-7). Like the seahorse who hangs on, I want to invite you to embrace the Lord today. *Today, we will learn to wait on the Lord.*

Ready for Reproof

I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved.

Drawing on the words of today’s text, the title of today’s message is “**Wait for It.**” I would like to challenge you with *Three Ways to “Wait for It.”*

Wait for what? What are we waiting for? Habakkuk knew that something was wrong with his thinking. God didn’t make sense to him and he knew well enough that God is not nonsensical. No, Habakkuk knew that, no doubt, the problem was with him. But where was he incorrect? Where was his thinking wrong? In a manner that models humble belief for all of us, Habakkuk watched for God’s reproof. Like a watchman on a watchtower scanning the horizon, Habakkuk waited for God to challenge and change Habakkuk’s thinking. So in our own increasingly violent society, what are we watching and waiting for? This is the first way to “**wait for it.**”

Watch for the Lord to correct you through the Message of His Word. 1

- To correct your thinking about Him
- To correct your thinking about His work

Surely this is what we need today as well. Our hearts are deceitful and desperately wicked (Jeremiah 17:9-10). Only the Lord can search the heart and try the reins of our hearts. We desperately need His Word, and more specifically the reproofs – the corrections – of His Word. In these days, we need as much exposure to Scriptural teaching as we can get. It is crucial that we watch for the Lord in order that He may correct our thinking about Him and His work. Habakkuk waited for God-given revelation. But today, we hold in our hands the completed, special revelation of God. We have the Book of answers.

Before we proceed, I would ask you: Are you starting to hear an answer to Margaret Brennan’s question: “*How do you kill an idea?*” Our great God kills our foolish, wrong-headed ideas for our blessing and a great benefit to others. This is why pastors are called to preach “**warning every man and teaching every man that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus**” (Colossians 1:28). God’s reproof corrects us and causes us to love the Lord our God with all of our heart and soul and mind and to love our neighbors as ourselves (Matthew 22:38-40). **On these two hang all the law and the prophets.**

What are we waiting for? **And the LORD answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: Though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.**

It is God’s purpose that His answers (His vision) be so plain that you can understand it, embrace it and run to others with it. (Doesn’t this remind you of “The Great Commitment” of 2 Timothy

2:21?) God's Word will give you confidence in the great war of ideas. So, "Wait for It." In its more than eighty years, Calvary Baptist Church has been built on "wait for it preaching" – going all the way back to the prophecy conferences of our found, Dr. T. Richard Dunham. So what is the second way to "wait for it?"

Wait on the Lord to give you confidence through the Message of His Word. 2-3

- Get ready to use your energies to spread His Message
- You can be certain that what He has promised, He will do.
- You must be patient, waiting for the Lord to fulfill His Word.

What you are seeing here is the power of God's prophecies – His predictions about the future. His words will be so plain, so simple, that you can embrace His message and quickly carry it to others.

Do you remember reading "The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere" by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow? "Listen my children and you shall hear / Of the midnight ride of Paul Revere, / On the eighteenth of April, in Seventy-five; / Hardly a man is now alive / Who remembers that famous day and year.

..
He said to his friend, "If the British march / By land or sea from the town to-night, / Hang a lantern aloft in the belfry arch / Of the North Church tower as a signal light, -- / One if by land, and two if by sea;
And I on the opposite shore will be, / Ready to ride and spread the alarm . . ." So Paul Revere confidently rode through the night with one simple message: "The British are coming."

God desires to give you supreme confidence with a simple message. He puts His credibility on the line with His prophecies.

Please turn to Isaiah 41:21-23. When the Lord sets forth a test case for credibility: "Produce your cause, saith the LORD; Bring forth your

strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob. Let them bring them forth, and shew us what shall happen: Let them shew the former things, what they be, That we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or declare us things for to come. Shew the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods: Yea, do good, or do evil, That we may be dismayed, and behold it together."

In the very next chapter, the Lord gave a prophecy about the Messiah: "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; Mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth;" (Isaiah 42:1) in the Servant Song.

Turn ahead to Isaiah 48:3-6. How does the Lord demonstrate His authority – His credibility – to stubborn, obstinate people? I have declared the former things from the beginning; and they went forth out of my mouth, and I shewed them; I did them suddenly, and they came to pass. Because I knew that thou art obstinate, and thy neck is an iron sinew, and thy brow brass: I have even from the beginning declared it to thee; before it came to pass I shewed it thee: lest thou shouldest say, Mine idol hath done them, and my graven image, and my molten image, hath commanded them. Thou hast heard, see all this; and will not ye declare it? I have shewed thee new things from this time, even hidden things, and thou didst not know them.

Now turn back for a moment to Isaiah 45 and note the first few words: "Thus saith the Lord to His anointed, to Cyrus . . ." Who was Cyrus? In this prophecy (given about 720 B.C.) about Cyrus -- 150 years before Cyrus was even born, God gave answers. He predicted that a ruler would bring the brutal Chaldeans to their knees. The name of the Persian ruler who defeated Babylon was – wait for it – Cyrus. This is one of the main ways that God communicates His credibility – His trustworthiness – throughout the Scriptures. "How firm a foundation you saints of the Lord is made for your faith in His excellent Word / What more can He say than to you He hath said?"

I want to remind you that there are hundreds of prophecies in the New Testament which have not yet been fulfilled. In direct answer to Habakkuk's question in Habakkuk 1:2, "**O Lord, how long . . . ?**" God answers: **WAIT FOR IT.** Trust God. Embrace Him by faith. Trust His faithful Word, His faithful promises and His faithful prophecies. He will bring it to pass. In a few moments, as we sing these hymns that exalt Jesus and His prophecies, I hope that you will give your heart to singing. "*Jesus shall reign where'er the sun doth his successive journeys run . . .*"

Can we make this message plain and simple so that everyone who reads it can run with it? Yes, we can. And that is what verse 4 in our text is all about. "**Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith.**" Many scholars believe that it was this verse alone that God told Habakkuk to write on the tablet. This verse is so important that we will spend all of the next message on it. Suffice it to say for now that it is quoted three times in the New Testament in some crucial places.

Behold, His Soul Which Is Lifted Up is Not Right

What was the real problem behind the violence, strife and contention in Judah? Proud souls. What was behind the brutality of the Babylonian assassins? Proud souls which were lifted up against God. What was behind the violence of Mohamed as he drove his semi-truck on a killing spree through Nice, France? His proud soul was not upright in him.

The really amazing thing about this last mass murder was this: those close to him said that he was not a very good Muslim. His cousin was quoted as saying that "he drank alcohol, ate pork and took drugs. He was an "unlikely jihadist" who beat his wife and never went to the mosque."ⁱⁱⁱ So for a moment, I would like for you to put yourself in the murder's shoes. You're not devout in your religion. You're not earning your way to heaven

by your behavior. If there were just some way – with one final act of devotion – to insure that you could enjoy eternal paradise, would you act upon it? Well along come the teachers of the Quran and the Haddith quoting verses such as the Quran 61:10, 4:74, and 9:111. "*You who believe, shall I show you a bargain that will save you from painful punishment?*" James Arlandson notes, "In [Quran 61:10], the Arabic word "*jihad*" (root is j-h-d) is the means or currency to trade in this life for the life to come."^{iv} That truck driver (the soldier of ISIS) mowed down eighty-four pedestrians on the streets and sidewalks. And now we know why it was so important for him to get out of the truck with his guns blazing, to die a martyrs' death. By his last full measure of devotion, he believed that he was earning his way to heaven.

Dear friends, we must cast down this imagination through the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Do you see why Margaret Brennan asked, "*How do you kill an idea?*" More specifically, how do you kill this particular satanic doctrine? In a "postmodern world," "truth" is supposed to be whatever you believe it to be. Your perceptions are "your truth" that others "must accept and affirm." But when evil raises its ugly head and suicidal martyrs begin to slay people, "the postmodernists" have a question: "*How do you kill a idea?*"

The Just Shall Live By His Faith

The Gospel that we proclaim is not a religion of "doing," but a religion of "done." Not a religion of fighting and killing infidels, the Gospel is about faith in God's kindness. World religions are about trying to do things to get close to God; the Gospel is about trusting the things that God has done to draw close to you.

Our faith is not "faith in faith," as if any religion will do. No, "the just shall live by faith," in what God has promised and prophesied. His prophecies center around the finished work of His Son, Jesus Christ – His substitutionary death for our sins, His burial, His resurrection – rising again on the third day. This simple, plain Gospel is for reading,

retaining and running to tell others. Isn't it wonderful to know that even back in Habakkuk's day, the Gospel was at the center of everything?

So, what was the message to those Old Testament saints? **Wait for it!** Wait for the Lord to do His mighty work among the nations. Wait for the fullness of time for the Lord to bring forth His Son (Galatians 4:4). **Wait for it!**

“Behold, his soul *which* is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith.” The great need for proud sinners is to repent and to come to new life by faith in Jesus Christ. Today we have the prophecies of the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. And the message for today is the same. From today's text, we can say with authority: **“WAIT FOR IT.”**

Pastor Gordon Dickson, Calvary Baptist Church, Findlay, Ohio

ⁱ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Margaret_Brennan

ⁱⁱ http://www.answering-islam.org/Authors/Arlandson/death_economy.htm

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3691895/He-drank-alcohol-ate-pork-took-drugs-NOT-Muslim-Truck-terrorist-Mohamed-Lahouaiej-Bouhlel-s-cousin-reveals-unlikely-jihadist-beat-wife-NEVER-went-mosque.html>

^{iv} http://www.answering-islam.org/Authors/Arlandson/death_economy.htm