

Selah: Lift Up Your Head

Habakkuk 3:3-15

We begin by defining the word *Selah* which is used 3 times in our text (3:3, 9, 13) and only in the Psalms. There are three definitions: 1. **Lift up** (A musical note), 2. **Stop** (The end of a thought), 3. **Amen** (true). Habakkuk chapter 3 is a prayerful song from Habakkuk in response to all that God has revealed to him. In summary, God is at work bringing good to His people during the most difficult and dark times in life.

I. God's presence is in your darkest hour. *"God comes from Teman...and Mount Paran. Selah"* (v. 3).

In most English versions the verb for God coming is in the past tense. God *came*. This is unfortunate because Habakkuk prays in the "prophetic perfect" which involves knowing the past, anticipating the future, and *faithing it till you see it*. Teman (Edom) and Paran are mountains to the south of Israel. *"God shone forth from Mount Paran. He came with myriads of holy ones from the south"* (Deut. 33:2). In Habakkuk 3:3-4 we find Habakkuk understands he's not alone facing the evil Babylonians (608 B.C.). God is light (*His radiance is like the sunlight* v. 4), but the hour's dark (*the hiding of His power* v. 4). So, if you can't see or sense God, and if you can't feel or find God, where is He?

II. God's power is over your darkest hour. *"Your bow is bare ... chastisement is sworn. Selah"* (v. 9).

You may be surprised where the prophet sees God's presence and power in his life. It requires faith.

- A. He is in pestilence and plagues – "things you didn't ask for and things you didn't deserve" (v. 5).
- B. He is in catastrophes and calamities – "in strongholds shattering and confidence collapsing" (v. 6).
- C. He is in enemies and emergencies – "in the seemingly prosperous and powerful wicked" (v. 7).
- D. He is in nature and in need – "when the rivers flood and the seas consume" (v. 8).

Habakkuk's conclusion reached is that God's discipline of His wayward people is a guarantee (v. 9).

"Your bow was made bare, the rods of chastisement were sworn. Selah" (v. 9). Lift up. Stop. Amen.

We want comfort, God wants character. We want satisfaction; God selflessness. *Selah*. "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when you are reproved by Him; for those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives" (Heb. 12:5b-6).

Discipline isn't a dirty word. It carries the idea of "restoring gently" (Gal. 6:1) as a broken bone reset. Sometimes, in the most extreme circumstances, the discipline is fierce, painful, and noisy – but good.

III. God's purpose is through your darkest hour. *"...for the salvation of Your people... Selah"* (v. 13).

In Habakkuk 3:10-15 the prophet gives us the source of his prayerful praise to the Lord. God works all things for the good of His people, and nothing can stand in His way. Not governments ("the sun and moon" v. 11 – Hebrew language for governments), not nations (v. 12), not the house of evil (v. 13).

"You went forth for the salvation of Your people, for the salvation of Your anointed" (v. 13).

There is a two-fold meaning of this verse. God is interested in delivering the Messiah and His people.

- A. **He crushes the head of evil** (v. 13). A reminder of God's first promise of salvation (Gen. 3:15).
- B. **He conquers those who devour the oppressed** (v. 14). God's people defend the oppressed.
- C. **He corrects what is wrong** (v. 15). *"You trampled the sea (the world) with Your horses"* (v. 15).

In Scripture, God's deliverance is often seen in a vision of horses (e.g. Zechariah 6, Revelation 6).

"And I lifted up my eyes and saw four chariots coming... with red horses, black horses, white horses, and dappled (pale) horses" (Zech. 6:1-3). John repeats the same vision in Revelation 6.

You serve a God who is in charge; a God who will work all things for your good.

When the dark storms come your way, see God in them preparing you for your purpose in life.