
3 Nephi 3 — We Will Wait Till They Come — Lachoneus, Gidgiddoni, and the Defense of a Gathered People

3 Nephi 3: the sixteenth year. Lachoneus, the chief governor, receives a chilling epistle from Giddianhi, leader of the Gadianton robbers. Giddianhi flatters Lachoneus's firmness, then demands that he surrender all his lands and people, threatening utter destruction, and inviting the Nephites to 'yield yourselves up unto us... become acquainted with our secret works, and become our brethren' — claiming the secret society is good, of ancient date, and handed down. Lachoneus, a just man who cannot be frightened by a robber, refuses; he calls his people to repentance and to cry to the Lord for strength, gathers the whole nation — Nephites and converted Lamanites alike, with their flocks, herds, and substance — into one fortified place in the land southward, and warns that only repentance can deliver them. He appoints Gidgiddoni, a great prophet, as chief captain. When the people want to march out and attack the robbers in their mountain strongholds, Gidgiddoni refuses: 'The Lord forbid; for if we should go up against them the Lord would deliver us into their hands... we will not go against them, but we will wait till they shall come against us; therefore as the Lord liveth, if we do this he will deliver them into our hands.' The people gather by the thousands and tens of thousands, repent, pray, fortify, and arm — and wait. The chapter is a study in righteous defense: the just leader who will not be intimidated, the prophet-general who will not strike first, and a whole people gathered into one body, repenting and waiting on the Lord rather than trusting their own strength to go out and win.

This is a chapter about how a righteous people defends itself, and it turns out the answer is almost the opposite of what instinct would suggest. The Gadianton robbers have grown into an existential threat, and their leader Giddianhi sends Lachoneus a letter demanding total surrender. The Nephites are afraid, and the natural military response — the aggressive, decisive, *go-get-them* response — is to march out and destroy the robbers in their mountain strongholds before they can attack. The people propose exactly this: *let us go up upon the mountains and into the wilderness, that we may fall upon the robbers and destroy them in their own lands* (v. 20). It sounds bold, faithful, proactive. And the prophet-general Gidgiddoni flatly forbids it: *The Lord forbid; for if we should go up against them the Lord would deliver us into their hands* (v. 21). Instead, he gathers the entire nation into one fortified body and tells them to *wait*. This is the chapter's great counterintuitive lesson — that the righteous defense is not the aggressive offense, that there is a kind of strength that consists in *not striking first*, in gathering, repenting, and waiting on the Lord rather than rushing out in one's own strength to win.

Hebrew Word Studies

qavah (קָוָה) — "to wait, wait for, look for with expectation, hope" — **qavah**, to wait for, to look eagerly toward, to hope; the root carries the sense of a taut, expectant waiting, like a cord stretched in tension toward what is coming. To wait on the Lord is not passive idleness but active, hopeful, trusting expectation v. 21 (we will not go against them, but we will wait till they shall come against us; therefore... he will deliver them into our hands). Gidgiddoni's whole strategy — we will wait till they shall come against us — is, at its spiritual root, an act of waiting on the Lord, and the Hebrew *qavah* names a kind of waiting that is anything but passive. The root is connected to the word for a cord or line (*qav*) — something stretched taut — and so *qavah* carries the sense of a tense, straining, expectant waiting, the soul stretched toward God in eager hope, like a watchman leaning toward the dawn. It is one of the great verbs of biblical faith. *Wait (qavah) on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord* (Ps. 27:14). *They that wait (qavah) upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles* (Isa. 40:31). *I wait (qavah) for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope... more than they that watch for the morning* (Ps. 130:5–6). In every case, *qavah* is the posture of a soul that has done what it can and now trusts God for the outcome — not idle resignation but taut, hopeful, courageous expectation. And this is precisely the strategy Gidgiddoni commands, and precisely why it requires *more* faith than the aggressive alternative, not less. The people wanted to *go up* and *fall upon* the robbers — to take the outcome into their own hands, to act, to force the issue by their own strength. That is the natural instinct, and it feels like faith (*let us go destroy them*), but it is actually the opposite: it is leaning on one's own arm. Gidgiddoni discerns that to go on the offensive would be to forfeit God's deliverance — *if we should go up against them the Lord would deliver us into their hands* (v. 21) — and that the path of faith is to wait, to gather and repent and pray and then trust God to deliver the enemy *into their hands* in his own time. This is the hardest thing for a frightened, capable people to do: to *not act*, to wait, to leave the deliverance to God when every nerve screams to march out and settle it. But *qavah* is the very heart of trust. *Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently (qavah) for him* (Ps. 37:7). *It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord* (Lam. 3:26). The whole difference between the Nephites *left in their own strength* (Hel. 4:13) and the Nephites *delivered in the strength of the Lord* is the difference between *acting in their own might and waiting on the Lord*. Gidgiddoni chooses the waiting — and the next chapter will show that the God who is *qavah*-ed, waited upon, delivered the robbers into their hands exactly as promised. To wait on the Lord is not to do nothing; the Nephites gathered, fortified, repented, armed, and prepared with all their might. It is, rather, to do everything you can and then *refuse to seize the outcome*, to hold the soul taut toward God in expectant trust and let him deliver in his own way. That is the strength of not striking first: not weakness, not passivity, but the highest courage there is — the courage to wait on the Lord.

From the Chapter's Architecture

```cross-references Ps. 27:14 (wait — *qavah* — on the Lord: be of good courage... wait, I say, on the Lord — the waiting Gidgiddoni commands, v. 21); Isa. 40:31 (they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength — the strength of waiting, not of going up in one's own might); Ps. 37:7 (rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him — the patient defensive posture, v. 21); Lam. 3:26 (it is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord — the quiet waiting of the gathered people, v. 25); Ps. 130:5–6 (I wait for the Lord... more than they that watch for the morning — the taut, expectant waiting on God); Ex. 14:13–14 (stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord... the Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace — the people who wait and let God deliver, the model for v. 21); Alma 48:14 (the Nephites taught never to give an offense... nor even to raise the sword except... to preserve their lives — the defensive ethic Gidgiddoni follows, v. 21); Hel. 4:13 (the Nephites left in their own strength when they trusted themselves — the opposite of waiting on the Lord); 3 Ne. 4:10–11, 33 (the deliverance that comes because the people waited, repented, and trusted — the payoff of this chapter); Mosiah 29:25–27 (the just judge ruling in righteousness — Lachoneus the just man, v. 12); Hel. 6:21–30 (the secret combination handed down from generation to generation — the good... of ancient date... handed down that Giddianhi claims, v. 9). ```