

The LORD is our Strength

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[0 : 00] You can keep your Bibles at Habakkuk chapter 3. As we come to the third and final chapter of Habakkuk.

Now remember that Habakkuk lives in this time of the nation of Judah. During the time when the king and all the people, or many of the people, were not following the Lord. Instead, they were following the pagan gods. Worshipping them. Taking advantage of the poor and the needy. Injustice is all rampant.

So Habakkuk asks God, why? Why is it this way? When will you actually act on behalf of your people?

And we see that God then has given the most shocking reply. That he will deal with the injustice that Habakkuk can see around him in Israel. But the thing is that he's going to do it by using the Babylonians.

[1 : 02] By using an even more unjust people, a worse people, to deal with violence. And Habakkuk can't understand of how can you use this people that is even worse against God's covenant people.

And the Lord answers this accusation by giving him a vision. A vision for all the ages. That judgment is coming. That judgment is coming.

And God's enemies shall be destroyed. The Babylonians. And all to come afterwards. And the Lord's response in chapter 2 ends this way.

But the Lord is in his holy temple. Let all the earth keep silence before him. See, this verse is the climax of the response God gives.

The Lord is in his temple. He is on the throne. He works out all things according to his purposes. And what can our response be?

[2 : 12] It is like when we see in the book of Job. When the Lord responds to Job and the many things that have been said. And he responds saying, where were you? When I lay the foundations of the earth.

Tell me if you have the understanding. Or who shut in the sea with doors when it burst out? And have you commanded the morning since your days began?

And cost the dawn to know its place. Will you put me in the wrong? Will you condemn me that you may be in the right? Do you have an arm like God?

And can you thunder with a voice like his? You know, what can we mere creatures say when we come before such an amazing, powerful, and awesome being.

The creator of all things. And as we come to chapter 3 here. We see that Habakkuk has heard the vision. He has pondered its message.

[3 : 19] And his attitude has changed. It is now altogether different than we saw in the first chapter. Now before we get into the sermon, please pray with me.

O Lord, we pray this evening that you may speak. We come needy and desperate to hear your voice.

Not the voice of man, but the voice of God. So we pray this evening that you may speak. By your spirit. And in Jesus' name we pray.

Amen. Now seeing is believing. That is a phrase that we probably have heard. That we probably understand.

That to see is to believe. You know, we don't have to question the things that we see. You know, I just know that they're true. You know, I know you have these pews in front of me.

[4 : 23] And the camera back there that we see. And this is how we may describe the apostle Thomas. After the resurrection of Christ. Because after the resurrection of Christ, we see him

appear to all the apostles except for Thomas.

And all the apostles come and they tell Thomas that they have seen the Lord. That he is risen again. That he showed himself to them. And he cannot believe.

He says, unless I see the very holes from the crucifixion nails in the hands of Jesus. Unless I see the hole in his side made by the spear.

I cannot believe. I cannot believe. See, he needs to see in order to believe. And our Savior was gracious enough to appear to Thomas to show himself so that Thomas may believe.

Now, our senses that play a vital and essential role in everyday life. In the way that we go about everyday business. Do they not? As we hear and we see and we feel and we taste and we smell.

[5 : 36] You know, the sight of an oasis in the desert. Of hearing the word of God preached. Of feeling the embrace of a friend.

Of smelling that delicious meal that we've just made. Or that smell of coffee in the morning. Or as you've gotten out of bed. The senses truly make and shape our reality.

Our day to day lives. But there's more to us than just our senses. For Paul says we walk by faith. And not by sight. For if we were limited to our sight.

If we were limited to our present circumstances. And that all that there is to look on. Is the suffering and the pain that we're experiencing in any given moment.

Than what hope is there? What hope is there? If all that there is that we have to look on. Is the present circumstances.

[6 : 39] But God has given us more. Than just our senses. That we may set our inner eyes. That we may set the eyes of our soul.

You know, our faith. On something else. On God. So the message this evening in Habakkuk 3 for us. Is to look to God.

To look to God. And in this chapter. We're going to look to God first. In the past. And then second. In the present. And then third.

In the future. So first then. To look to God in the past. We see God's presence. And God's deliverance.

So. Let us see God's presence. In verses 3. And verses 4. In the first few verses of Habakkuk response here.

[7 : 36] We see Habakkuk. Describing God. Of what he is like. So we see him say that he came from Teman. From Mount Paran. And these are references to the Exodus.

That we see in the book of Exodus. And he gives an image here of God. Of his splendor. Covering the heavens. Brightness like the light. Rays from his hand.

And this imagery here. Reminds us of the Lord appearing on Mount Sinai. You remember the scene of the people. Standing at the bottom of the mountain. With the Lord coming down on the top of the mountain.

And they're all terrified. And they see the thick clouds. And the thundering. And the earthquakes. And the people tremble.

They're terrified. They hear the great voice. And they dare not get any closer. Lest they should die. They got a taste that day.

[8 : 35] Of the majesty of the Lord. Of his might. And of his power. They experienced the presence of the Lord. And they were awestruck. And Habakkuk is painting this picture for us.

Of who the Lord is. You know. Making use of these words here. To bring us back. To Mount Sinai. To remind himself. His hearers. And us.

Of the majesty of the Lord. You know. It is so easy to focus on the problem in front of us. On the challenge. On the tribulation in front of us. That nothing. May seem possible.

That there's no way out. There's no escape. And the longer we stare. At our circumstances. The larger they seem.

The obstacle just grows. And gets darker. So Habakkuk is trying to get us to look. Away from our circumstances. Not to ignore them. But not to make them larger than they actually are.

[9 : 38] Instead he wants us to focus most of all. On the Lord. To look to God. Whose splendor covered the heavens.

Whose brightness is like the light. From whose hands rays flash forth. And I've heard it preached. That when confronted with a love.

An illicit love. A sinful love. Be it love of money. Of lust. Money. Pride. Or whatever it may be. The only thing that can conquer that love.

Is a greater love. Is a greater love. The greater love. Of Jesus. Is what is necessary. And needed. To dethrone. This love of sin.

And similarly. Here. I think. When confronted. With a most dreadful. And terrible circumstance. You need something. Or rather. Someone. Who is greater.

[10:36] Than what you're facing. And we see Jesus in the gospel say. Do not fear those who kill the body. But cannot kill the soul.

Rather fear him who can destroy both soul. And body. In hell. So what is he saying there? Well there's something greater.

Something worse. Than dying. Than our body being slain. Whatever we face on this earth. What is the worst thing that can happen? What is the worst thing?

Well. We may die. Or we will die. But there is actually something worse. It is to die a sinner. Having rejected Jesus.

And thus facing his judgment. His just and right judgment. Of body and soul. At the day of judgment. So what comfort may we draw.

[11:35] From looking to God in the past. As we see his presence. When God's presence. With his people. We see God. We see who he is.

We see what he is capable of. See we need to have. A high view of God. A view that sees a big God. A God in whose hands.

Is all the might. And all the power. Able to do far more. Than whatever we can think. Or ask. Or even imagine.

And then next we. We move on. And we see now God's. Deliverance. And if you would. Look at verses 5. Through 15. See in verse 5.

We see the beginnings of judgment. We see the pestilence. And the plague. That reminds us of the exodus. Of the time when. When God appeared. And Pharaoh would not let his people go.

[12:32] He refused. So. As a consequence. God was. Brought the 10 plagues. To the people. Of Egypt. To make them. Release the Hebrews.

People of Israel. To leave. In verse 6. We see then the shaking of nations. The eternal mountains being scattered. And these are images of terrible judgment.

As even the firmest of things. You know. What's the most stable thing we can think of? The mountains. Perhaps one of them. They are shook. They cannot stand.

In verse 7. He speaks of Cushion. And Midian. These enemies of God's people. As they headed into the promised land. In verse 8.

He speaks about the rivers and the sea. Asking. Was God's wrath against them? Here. He's alluding to God's power. That we saw. With the Nile River.

[13:28] And the plagues of Egypt. As it turned into blood. Of the power. Displayed at the Red Sea. As God's people were stuck. With the Pharaohs coming down. With their chariots.

To slay the people of God. And God parts the way. That they can go through. Being saved. With the waters coming down. On the Egyptians. And also of the River Jordan.

As God's people passed. Into the promised land. These are mighty acts. That demonstrate the power. Of God. Verse 10.

We see more mountains. In arriving. How great. Is God's judgment. And we see that mountains. Again. The most constant thing. We can think of. Are struck here.

Verse 11. Goes even beyond that. Speaks of the sun and the moon. Standing still. Which here alludes to Joshua. Chapter 10. Where God allows for the sun and the moon.

[14:25] To stand still. In order that Joshua. May have enough daylight. To execute God's judgment. On the enemies of God. So the mountains cannot stand before the Lord.

And now we see that the sun and the moon. Obey. Our Lord. So how great is. The power of God. God. But it is far greater.

Than we can understand. And by his power. He brings forth judgment. Just judgment. On the nations. Look at verse 12. The sin and the wickedness of the earth.

And the nations. Are all dealt with. But the question is. You know. Why? You know. Why does God go forth. To execute this judgment.

You know. What is the reason behind it? And what we see emphasized here. In Habakkuk 3. Is that he does it. For his people. He does it for his people.

[15:24] Because in verse 8. When he speaks of the parting. Of the Red Sea. We get this image. Don't we not? Do we not? Of chariot of salvation. See this is an image.

It's a clear picture. Of God saving. His people from the Egyptians. You see. One of the most dreaded. Weapon. Piece of weaponry. That the Egyptians had.

Was the chariot. The becoming down. Towards the Israelites. And here. We get the image. Of the Lord. Coming on a chariot.

Not to destroy them. But to deliver them. In verse 13. Right after having said. That God judged the nations. Habakkuk says. That God went out.

For. The salvation. Of his people. That is the reason. That he did this. So as we look to God. And we look to him in the past.

[16:20] We see his presence. We see his deliverance. Well you may say. That's great. That he did those things. Before. But how can we be sure. About his presence.

And his deliverance today. See Malachi 3 says. For I the Lord. Do not change. The Lord does not change.

James 1 says that. Every good gift. And every perfect gift. Is from above. Coming down from the father of light. With whom there is no variation. Or shadow due to change.

See our God. Is a never. Changing God. He always remains the same. He's the same yesterday. Today. And tomorrow. And therefore.

We can look to God in the past. And have confidence. For today. We can look to scripture. As Habakkuk has done here. To remind himself.

[17:18] And us. Of God's majesty. And mighty acts. But you can also look. Into your own life. Can you not? Of the mercy.

That God showed you. When he saved you. You can see. The power of God. As he. Through however long. You have walked with Jesus.

He has been there. He has worked things out. And you can look back. And you can see that. And you may use that. As a.

As comfort. So. And even the hymn. That we will sing in a few minutes. At the end of the sermon. I hope even that. Will be an encouragement. As we look and think about.

God's mighty acts. In the past. So look. To God in the past. And then second. Look to God. In the present.

[18:17] If you would. Look at verse. Verse 16. So we see here. That Habakkuk. Habakkuk says. I hear. But what is it.

That he hears. What he hears. Is the prophecy. That God has given. In the previous chapter. Of the coming. Of the Babylonians. Is the destruction.

And the destruction. Of Israel. So he trembles. His lips quiver. He gives the picture. Of rotteness. Entering into his bones.

His legs. Tremble. He does not. He does not. Pretend. That everything is okay. That everything is fine.

You know. When. When someone asks you. How are you doing? And it doesn't matter. If it's the worst day. In your life. You'll say. Oh I'm fine.

[19:14] I'm good. Isn't that true? Isn't that what we do? You see. We as Christians. We should not act. As if everything is perfect.

As if everything is great. As if nothing is ever wrong. Sometimes we can feel that pressure. Isn't it? As we want to be. A witness to Christ.

Of showing. Yes. Jesus is amazing. Look how. Great life is. But instead. I think it's. An even greater witness. When.

You may say. You know. Things. Are not great. But Jesus is mine. But he is with me. He loves me. No. We do not need to smile. Every day. To pretend. Everything is okay. To the Christian faith. It recognizes. It recognizes great pain. In this life.

[20:14] But it also speaks of a great hope. So do we have a great hope in Christ? Well yes we do. The life. Death. And resurrection of Christ. Is what gives us that hope.

What gives us that joy. But it does not negate. The many things that we must endure here. Does not negate. Does not negate. The circumstances.

Remove them. That we find ourselves in. So Habakkuk trembles. And his lips. Quiver. See when Paul writes.

To the Thessalonians. He says a part of his writing. Is that they may. Not grieve. As others do. Who have no hope. See it doesn't say not to grieve.

But it rather to grieve. Or rather. Not to grieve. As those who have no hope. So Christians grieve. But we do it differently.

[21 : 15] We do it with hope. With confidence. We wait. As Habakkuk says. As Habakkuk says and does. He knows dark days are ahead of him. Yet he waits trusting.

In the Lord. That God's plan is good. And that God will be. His comfort. So may we look to God in the past. May we look to God in the present.

And thirdly. May we look to God. In the future. If you would look at verses 17 to 19. See Habakkuk here gives us a picture.

A glimpse of the future. A dark. And dreary future. In which. The tree does not blossom. Where there's no fruit on the vines. No produce of the olive.

And no food in the fields. The flocks will be cut off. There will be no herds. See what is the worst picture you could give? Well that's what Habakkuk is giving us right here.

[22 : 15] It's a picture of utter and total famine. You know give us. Our daily bread. And we pray in the Lord's prayer. And yet the picture here.

Is the absence of this. Daily bread. See it's difficult for us. Living here in Edinburgh. I think to really grasp. The severity of this situation.

We've never experienced anything close to it. Of utter desolation. See Habakkuk has been. Given a most dreaded vision. By God. And here. Habakkuk gives the worst case scenario.

And what does he say. What will Habakkuk's response be to this disaster? He says. Yet I will rejoice. In the Lord.

He will rejoice. But how? How can he rejoice. When there's nothing to eat. When there's no bread. That awaits him. Well it is because he has bread.

[23 : 15] He doesn't have the. Earthly bread. But he has. The eternal bread. He has. The bread of life. You see the Lord. Is.

Habakkuk says. The God. Of his salvation. Let goods and kindred go. Martin Luther wrote. This mortal life. Also. The body they may kill.

God's truth. Abided still. His kingdom. Is forever. And isn't this what Habakkuk. Is saying here. Habakkuk is not.

Like the people. That we see in the gospels. Who. Who sought out Jesus. After feeding the five thousand. Who. Weren't really looking for Jesus.

They weren't looking for the gospel. They were just looking for. For more bread. You see Habakkuk. Seeks for the one. Who multiplied the bread. Not the bread itself.

[24 : 11] But the one who. Who made it. Who is the bread of life. Who has saved him. Body and soul. Because even if he would die. The worst thing imaginable. Even this.

Would bring him to God. To Jesus Christ. And the days to come. When he. Will be given a new body. In the place. Where the fig tree. Shall forever blossom.

The vines. Be full of fruit. The produce. Of all of his fields. And herds. Never fail. But always. Be abundant. And what shall Habakkuk's. Strength be.

It will be the Lord. It will not be his own strength. Whatever. He might be able to. To muster up. What kind of strength. Would one have.

On a day. Like that. In a time. Like that. But the Lord. Will hold him up. Now the well-known hymn. It is well. With my soul.

[25 : 08] Was written by Horatio Spafford. And he knew pain. And suffering. Having lost much money. Having lost a son. And.

There was a time. They were living in the U.S. And decided to go on holiday. Here in the U.K. And he had work. That he had to finish. Before going.

So he sent his wife. And four daughters. Ahead of him. Before he was going to go. To meet them. But what happened was. The ship sunk. The wife made it.

But all the daughters. Perished. And. And. And. You know. They did not make it. And it was. On his own trip. Going to England.

That he. That he wrote. You know. This well-known hymn. As he wrote. The words. When peace like a river. Attendeth my way. When sorrows like sea billows roll.

[26 : 07] Whatever my lot. Thou has taught me to say. It is well. It is well. With my soul. And this. Evening. Is it well. With your soul. That's the question. To ask this evening. Because the answer. Is of utmost importance. You know.

There are those. Who profess. To preach Christ. Who speaks about. How Jesus will fix. All their life problems. He will fix. The money situation. He will fix.

Your confidence issue. He will fix. Your marriage. But there is no such promise. Habakkuk. Had a promise here. Not of.

Plenty. But of devastation. He had a promise. That all would be taken. Away from him. And if this was to be. Your lot.

[27 : 02] My lot. Would we still rejoice. In the Lord. Would we sing. Even so. It is well. With my soul.

May we look to God. In the past. In the present. And in. The future. See today. And in the days ahead.

We are. We are. We are. We are. We are. We are called. To look to God. To look to him. In the past. To see his presence. To see his deliverance. Of his people. Through the ages.

You consider. How he has done. Mighty and marvelous works. In your own life. And we just. To look in the present. And see that. God is calling us. Not to pretend.

That everything is fine. That everything is perfect. And okay. That it is okay. To fear. And to struggle. And to look to him. In grief.

[27 : 57] And in suffering. And then to look to him. In the future. Because we do not know. What the future will hold. Chronic illness. Unexpected death.

Utter devastation. But whatever may come. The Lord will be our strength. See we don't have to stand. On our own two feet. Because surely we would fall.

And not be able to get up. But you will have his strength. You will have him. Holding you up. Whatever awaits. No matter what befalls you.

The Lord. Himself. Is your rock. He is yours. He is your strength. He is your chariot.

Of salvation. His splendor. And his brightness. Go before you. As the prophecy in Revelation says. On the day of Jesus' return. In the new Jerusalem.

[28 : 52] The new heavens. And the new earth. There will be no need. For sun or moon. For the glory of God. Will give it light. The lamb himself. Jesus Christ.

Being its light. So may you. Dear Christian. Behold. Your God. To see him. To see your king.

See his might. His power. To see his love. His desire for you. This evening. And all the days that are to come. Until Jesus will return.

And if you're not a Christian. The question. The question is the same for you. Is it well with your soul? Do you sense the turmoil.

Within you? Can you withstand suffering like this? Can you face it. On your own? Well why don't you come to Christ?

[29 : 50] Why not come to Christ? Who will uphold you? Come to Christ. Who will be your strength? Come to Christ.

Who. Bids you only come. That is all he asks. And we finish by praying. With Horatio Spafford. Oh Lord.

Haste the day. When my faith shall be sight. The clouds be rolled back. As a scroll. The trump shall resound. The Lord shall descend.

And even so. It is well with my soul. Let us pray. Father God.

May we sing these words. May we sing them truthfully. Because we have set our heart on you. Lord may we not look to ourselves.

[30 : 53] May we not look to our own strength. But may we look to the one who. Has already overcome the world. To the one whose yoke is light.

And who loves and who seeks. Not the righteous. But sinners like us. And Father we pray these things.

In Jesus name. Amen. And if you would please stand. As we conclude by singing.

Oh God our help. In ages past. In Hastings.

In Michelle. In Jesus name. In Jesus name. In Jesus name. In Jesus name. In Jesus name. In
Jesus name. In Jesus name. In Jesus name.
[31 : 58] In Jesus name.