

Habakkuk Ch3v1-19 - Joy For The Journey Through Injustice And Pain

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[0 : 00] page 942, 942. So we've been blessed the last couple of weeks.

Sam has been preaching through the book of Habakkuk for us this August, so thank you, Sam, and we're looking forward to the final sermon in the series this morning. So we come to chapter 3 of Habakkuk.

You're kind of getting two psalms this morning. This reads quite like a psalm, doesn't it? Habakkuk's Prayer. So Habakkuk chapter 3, and we're going to read from verse 1 to the end of the chapter. A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet. Lord, I have heard of your fame. I stand in awe of your deeds, Lord.

Repeat them in our day, in our time. Make them known. In wrath, remember mercy. God came from Teman, the Holy One from Mount Paran.

[1 : 24] His glory covered the heavens, and his praise filled the earth. His splendor was like the sunrise. Rays flashed from his hands where his power was hidden.

Plague went before him. Pestilence followed his steps. He stood and shook the earth. He looked and made the nations tremble.

The ancient mountains crumbled, and the age-old hills collapsed. But he marches on forever. I saw the tents of Cush in distress, the dwellings of Midian in anguish.

Were you angry with the rivers, Lord? Was your wrath against the streams? Did you rage against the sea when you rode your horses and your chariots to victory?

You uncovered your bow. You called for many arrows. You split the earth with rivers. The mountains saw you and withered. And withered, torrents of water swept by and deep roared and lifted its waves on high.

[2 : 35] Sun and moon stood still in the heavens. At the glint of your flying arrows. At the lightning of your flashing spear. In wrath you strode through the earth.

And in anger you thrashed the nations. You came out to deliver your people. To save your anointed one. You crushed the leader of the land of wickedness.

You stripped him from head to foot. With his own spear you pierced his head. When his warriors stormed out to scatter us. Gloating as though about to devour the wretched who were in hiding. You trampled the sea with your horses. Churning the great waters. I heard and my heart pounded. My lips quivered at the sound.

Decay crept into my bones and my legs trembled. Yet I will wait patiently for the days of calamity. To come on the nation invading us.

[3 : 37] Though the fig tree does not bud. There are no grapes on the vines. Though the olive crops fail. And the fields produce no food.

Though there are no sheep in the sheepfold. And no cattle in the stalls. Yet I will rejoice in the Lord. I will be joyful in God my Savior. The sovereign Lord is my strength. He makes my feet like the feet of a deer.

He enables me to tread on the heights. Thank the Lord for his word. Thank you Sam. Thank you Sam. Good morning everybody.

Thank you so much Ralph for reading for us. And let's pray for a begin. Lord you are a holy, holy God.

[4 : 49] Everything we've read. Just shouts your majesty. Your glory. Oh give us reverence now.

And humility. To submit ourselves to your word this morning. In the midst of our painful struggles. In Jesus name.

Amen. Well the story is told about a group of new believers in Christ. Who were thrown into prison. By the authorities in their city. A public announcement was made. Warning anyone else. Who would dare. Align themselves to Jesus Christ.

That they would face the consequences. It was a gross injustice. But there were some other Christians. In the city who weren't caught.

[5 : 53] They weren't identified with Christ. And they had a big decision to make then. Would they dare to visit. Their brothers and sisters in prison. To feed them.

To care for them. The prison conditions were horrendous. Or would they stay in hiding. Well in Hebrews chapter 10.

Where that story is actually recorded. We read. That they did indeed go. And visit their brothers and sisters. In prison. And consequently.

Hebrews tells us. That they. Injured public insults. At the hands of the city authorities. And. Their property. Was confiscated. Now how would you feel.

Losing your home. Or your business. To some corrupt. Government. I'd be angry. And sickened. By the injustice. Of it all. But the author of Hebrews.

[6 : 55] Who is writing a letter. Directly to these Christians. And questions. Listen to what he says. He says. You joyfully. Accepted. The confiscation.

Of your property. Joyfully. Every time I've read that verse in my life. It has stopped me. In my tracks. How could you have joy.

In the middle of that. Painful. Struggle. And as I look around the room here. Many of you I know. And.

Many of you have tales of. Deep. Painful. Struggles. That you've either walked through in the past. Or are still walking through this very day.

Maybe it's. Losing. Battle. Against. Chronic. Long term pain. Maybe it's unjust treatment. In work. Or bullying. In school. Maybe it's depression. Or a struggling marriage.

[7 : 55] Maybe it's. Constant worry. About your kids. Maybe it was. Losing a loved one. Far too soon. And in all these things.

God has allowed. The struggle. To continue. In our lives. And just like Habakkuk did. Back in chapter one.

You may have asked him. Time and time again. To take away. That struggle. But God. Hasn't done it. Yet. And the question.

Being implicitly asked. In our passage today. Is this. How can you have joy. When the struggle. Just continues.

Unabated. How can you have joy. In the place of barrenness. And emptiness. Where pain. And injustice. Continue unchecked. If you were with us.

[8 : 56] The last few weeks. Back in chapter one. Habakkuk brought his. Honest questions. To God. About. The pain. And injustice. Surrounding him. And God's answer.

Was actually. What he feared the most. He was going to send. The Babylonian army. To overwhelm. Judah. That threw Habakkuk. Into this.

Turmoil. Even deeper than before. And rather than instantly. Fixing the problem. In chapter two. God asks Habakkuk. To live by faith.

In his. Future. Resolution. To the problems. Justice. Will be done. God's glory. Will be restored. God's name. Will be revered.

But. Habakkuk. Would have to wait. And now in chapter three. We hear Habakkuk's. Final response.

[9 : 51] To God. And what is he going to say? Well what strikes us first. Is that. Absolutely nothing. Has changed.

About his present. Situation. The painful struggle. Continues just as before. But. His outlook. Well that is transformed.

Verse two. Serves as a summary. Of the rest of the chapter. I think. Let's read it together. It says. Lord. I have heard.

Of your fame. I stand. In awe. Of your deeds. Lord. You know. God may seem absent.

In Habakkuk's. Days. But Habakkuk. Has heard. Of all the wonders. That God did. In the past. And he stands in awe. He worships. So first. Habakkuk.

[10:43] Looks back. To the past. In praise. And then. He looks forward. To the future. In faith. Look at the rest of verse two. Repeat those wondrous deeds.

In our day. In our time. Make them known. In wrath. Remember. Mercy. Habakkuk. Habakkuk. Really believes. That God will. Save his people. Again. And this. Short verse. Just sums up the rest. Of the chapter. Because. With praise for the past.

And faith for the future. Habakkuk. Is able to find joy. For the journey. And that's why we desperately. Need to hear God's word.

To us. Today. Because Habakkuk. Shows us. How we can. Have real joy. Even when the painful struggle. Doesn't change. So that's where we're going today.

[11:39] Let's. Begin. Back. In verse three. Where Habakkuk. Praises God. For the past. And this is a breathtaking. Recount. Of how God.

Came to fight. For his people. Bringing them out of slavery. In Egypt. And into the promised land. And the main point. That you need to know. Going through this whole section.

Is this. God. God. Shows his matchless power. To save. His people. Everything. That was considered. To be strong.

Secure. And praiseworthy. In their world. God shows up. To be helplessly weak. In comparison. Starting.

In verse three. God came from Timan. The holy one. From Mount Paran. His glory. Covered. The heavens. And his praise. The earth. The earth.

[12:32] His splendor. Was like the sunrise. Rays. Flashed. From his hand. Where his power. Was hidden. First.

God brings us. To Mount Paran. And this is the area. In the Sinai desert. Where God. First. Met with his people. After he brought them. Out of Egypt. And in verse six. We find the first.

Demonstration. God's. God's. Matchless. Power. Now. Just to ask you. As God people. Looked around them. What could have been more solid.

Or secure. Than the mountains. In their path. Well look in verse six. God stood. And shook the earth. He looked.

And made the nations tremble. The ancient mountains. Crumbled. And the age old hills. Collapsed. But he. Marches on.

[13:27] Forever. Wow. Here's the point. In this imagery. God. Is matchless. In power. The stability. Of the mountains. Is as nothing. Compared to him.

Next. What could be more terrifying. For the ancient peoples. Than the sea. It was untamable. Unpredictable. To be avoided. At all costs.

It was a symbol of chaos. Disorder. And terror. But look at verse. Eight. Were you angry. With the rivers. Lord. Was your wrath. Against the streams. Did you rage.

Against the sea. When you rode. Your horses. And your chariots. To victory. And then look down. At verse 15. You trampled. The sea.

With your horses. Churning. The great waters. The point is this. God. Is matchless. In power. The chaos. Of the sea. Is no match.

[14:22] Is no match. For him. Next. What could be more. Constant. Than the patterns. Of the solar system. Look at what the Israelites. Witnessed.

Their God. Doing. In verse. 11. Sun. And moon. Stood still. In the heavens. At the glint. Of your flying arrows. At the lightning.

Of your. Flashing spear. And you can read more. About that event. If you want. In Joshua 10. The point is this. God. Is matchless. In power. The planets.

Spin. At his. Command. Alone. Next. What. Who could be more. Threatening. For God's people. Than the surrounding. Nations. They were all out.

To destroy them. I read in verse 12. In wrath. You strode. Through the earth. And in anger. You threshed.

[15:15] Or you tread on. The nations. You came out. To deliver your people. To save. Your anointed one. You see. God. Is matchless.

In power. When God. Fought for his people. The enemy. Was doomed. Before they had. Even. Picked up. A sword. And lastly.

Who could be more. Invincible. In the eyes. Of God's people. Than. The kings. Of the earth. Now Israel. You may know. Was in slavery.

In Egypt. Okay. They were under the rule. Of the mighty pharaohs. For hundreds of years. And the pharaohs. They were worshipped. As gods. They were the most powerful men. In the world. At that time. But read.

Verse 13. Halfway through. You. Crushed. The leader. Of the land. Of wickedness. You stripped him. From head to foot.

[16:10] With his own spear. You pierced his head. When his warriors. Stormed out. To scatter us. The point in all these examples. Is clear. God shows his matchless power.

To save. His people. Over. And over. Again. Now. The thing is this. God.

Only fought. For the nation of Israel. He didn't fight for. The other nations around Israel. He fought for Israel alone. And all the other nations. Were excluded.

From God's presence. And his. Blessing. Not includes us. We don't have. I don't have direct. Blood lineage. To. The people of Israel. And you probably don't either.

Well. What about us? Well. You see. This is the thing. That God had made a promise. Way back. To Israel's forefather. Abraham. That one of Abraham's descendants. Will bring.

[17:06] Will bring blessing. To every. Nation. Hundreds of years later. Just around the time of Habakkuk. A little bit before him. The prophet Isaiah. Prophesied.

About this son. Who will be a light. To the Gentiles. That God's salvation. Would reach to the ends. Of the earth. And for hundreds of years.

God's people. Waited. The nations. Waited. Until Jesus. Christ. Arised. He was the fulfillment.

Of all of these promises. And he made it. Very. Very. Clear. That the message. Of the gospel. Was for. Every.

Nation. For anyone. Who would believe in him. Through his death. And resurrection. Anyone. Who believes in him. Can be welcomed. As a son.

[18:02] Of Abraham. By. Faith. We. Can be a part. Of the people of God. From every nation. Your. Direct. Blood lineage.

To Israel. Does not matter. And when God. Came out. And fought for his people. In Egypt. Releasing them. From slavery. To Pharaoh. This was. A foreshadowing.

Of a much. Greater. Deliverance. To come. When Jesus. Would come out. And fight for us. In his death. And resurrection. Defeating.

Our greatest enemy. Sin. And death. Death. He. Has come out. To fight. For you. And there are. A thousand other ways.

That he has done that. You have seen. His power. In your life. In small things. In a big life. Moments. When it couldn't just be chance. Or coincidence.

[18:59] You've witnessed. God's power. Changing. Things. In your life. And on the days. When God seems. Absent. When the struggle.

Isn't changing. Here's the thing. You need to recount. All. That God. Has done for you. Just like Habakkuk did. Maybe it's a journal.

That you record. Some of God's answers. To your prayers. Maybe it's a photo wall. With photos. Which remind you. Of the. Things that God has done. The mountains.

He's moved. In your life. You know. After God. Had led his people. Through the desert. Of Sinai. Okay. They were standing. On the edge. Of the promised land.

And he showed his power. Once again. Because there was this. Jordan River. In front of them. In flood season. Okay. There's no way. They could possibly. Get across it. They had no boats. They had a million people.

[19:58] But God stops. The flow. Of the Jordan River. He makes them. Pass over. Safely. And. What he says next. Is kind of strange. He tells them.

To take. Twelve stones. From the riverbed. Right in the middle of the river. Carry them to the edge. And stack them up. And he says.

Every time. You. And the generations. After you. See this stack of stones. You will remember. How the Lord. Your God. Stopped the river.

So that you could. Pass over. You know. You know what that little story. Tells us. God. Wants. His people. To remember. What he's done for them.

In the past. Okay. In fact. It's a big deal. To God. It's not just a nice thing. To do. Oh yeah. Remember what God's done. No. He. He really wants us. To do this. He commands us to.

[20 : 56] He doesn't just want us. To forget. So what is. Stacking stones. Going to look like. For you. Because. When we forget. What God has done. That's when we start.

To drift away. To other things. To other gods. Just like the Israelites did. Unfortunately. So we've learned. That the first. Step.

To have joy. On the journey. Is to give praise. For the past. And secondly. Habakkuk.

Also shows us. To have faith. For the future. After recounting. All of God's wonders. That he did. In the past. He responds. In verse 16.

Look at it with me. I heard. And my heart. Pounded. My lips. Quivered. At the sound. Decay. Crept. Into my bones. And my legs.

[21 : 51] Trembled. How about that. For a proper. Response. Of awe. And humility. After recounting. God's works.

But listen. To what he says next. And this is where. Faith for the future. Comes in. In verse 17. Actually. The end of verse 16. Yet.

I will wait. Patiently. For the day. Of calamity. To come. On the nation. Invading us. Habakkuk. Began his prayer.

Back in chapter 1. In a state. Of hopeless despair. And the situation. Hasn't changed. As we just said. But his outlook. Is completely transformed. Because now. Look at that.

He is. Content. To wait. Patiently. Through. The painful struggle. Because. Number one. He knows what God did. In the past. And number two. He really.

[22 : 46] Believes. In what God. Is going to do. In the future. He really. Believes. Justice. Justice. Will be done. God's glory. Will be restored. And God's name. Will be revered.

And Habakkuk. Simply. Takes God. At his word. He puts his small. Simple faith. In a big. Glorious. God. And he waits. Patiently. Oh. That we will be like Habakkuk. In our painful. Struggles. And if you hear God's word today.

You've got a choice to make. Do you believe his word? Do you really believe. That Jesus has already won the battle for you.

Over sin and death. Do you believe that one day pain will end. With a new. Resurrected body. Do you believe that God sees.

[23 : 43] Every injustice. And he will bring. Everyone. To account. God calls us to trust him. Even when the painful struggle.

Makes. Zero. Sense. Now remember the story. That we started with. Of those Christians. Who chose to visit their brothers and sisters.

In prison. Despite the consequences. They would face. Well I didn't read the rest. Of the verse. Which explains. Why. They had joy. Even in losing.

Their property. The writer said to them. You joyfully. Accepted. The confiscation. Of your property. Because. You knew.

That you yourselves. Had better. And lasting. Possessions. Let me read that again. Because. You knew. That you yourselves.

[24 : 39] Had better. And lasting. Possessions. Did you see. Their faith. In God's future promises. They could wave goodbye. To their properties. Their businesses. Because they.

Really believed. The promise. That all. Of heaven. Was theirs. They trusted Jesus. When he told them. That they would be rewarded.

A thousand times over. For any sacrifice. They made on earth. You see. Their faith. In the future promise. Led to real.

Joy. In the painful. In the painful. Struggle. Just like Habakkuk had. Just like we can have. Praise for the past.

Faith for the future. Leads to joy. On the journey. Listen to the closing words. Of Habakkuk's prayer. And just like those Christians.

[25 : 38] That the author of Hebrews. Is writing to. Habakkuk has no right. To be joyful. In this situation. Does he? I mean. Judah is in a dire situation.

It's unraveling. It's unraveling. In injustice. And they're about to be conquered. By the wicked. Babylonian empire. Nobody would blame. Habakkuk. For despairing.

Of life. In this moment. But listen to this. In verse 17. He says. Though the fig tree. Does not bud. And there are no grapes.

On the vines. Though the olive crop. Fails. And the fields. Produce no food. Though there are no sheep. In the pen. And no cattle.

In the stalls. Yet. I. Will rejoice. In the Lord. I will be joyful. In God. My. Savior. That is the joy.

[26 : 34] For the journey. That Habakkuk. Finds. It's not a fake smile. He puts on. It's not a temporary joy. In some fleeting. Pleasure. No.

It's a real. Deep. Rooted. Joy. In his Lord. It's a solid. Eternal. Joy. In God. His Savior. And that joy. Is ours. As we praise him. For what he's done. In the past. And really believe. In what he's going to do. In the future. It's the kind of joy.

That can't be taken away. From you. Because. It's built on something. Eternal. Something outside. This broken. Sin. Sin. Soaked. World. It's built on your. Eternally good.

Never. Failing. Father. Now that's not to say. We won't ever struggle to feel it. Maybe all that you can feel.

[27 : 31] At the moment. Is the pain of your circumstance. Even though you try. And give praise. For the past. And. Put your faith in God's promises. For the future. All you feel is pain.

And what can we say. In this situation. Well. If that is you. Bring it to your father. In prayer. Ask him. Ask him. Ask him. To grow that joy.

In you. By his spirit. As you remember. The battles. He's won in the past. For you. As you. Trust him. For the future. Joy. Is one of the fruits.

Of the spirit's life. In us. If we are united. To Christ. So. So we're asking. For something. Which the spirit. Loves to grow in us. As we walk with him.

Through. The painful struggle. And on the other hand. Joy is also a decision. That we make. Isn't it? Like Habakkuk does here.

[28 : 32] He. He chooses. To rejoice. In the Lord. Despite. The struggle. He's going through. And that. Is a beautiful. Act. Of faith. And it's something.

Which the Bible. Commands us. To do. Well. Habakkuk closes his prayer. In verse 19. With a stunning. Declaration. And this is what he says.

The sovereign. Lord. Is my. Strength. He. Makes. My feet. Like the feet. Of a deer. He. Enables me. To tread. On the heights. You see. Habakkuk. Trusts. That God. Is sovereign. Over the pain. And injustice.

In his life. He has allowed it. For his good. Reasons. And God's strength. Is one. Is what's going to make. His footing. Sure. As he walks. Through this.

[29 : 27] Dark. Valley. Of struggle. And if God. And if God. Did the same. For Habakkuk. Will he not also. Do the same. For us. Today. Let us.

Trust. In his sovereignty. Over the injustice. Over the pain. That he allows. In our lives. He. Will hold us fast. As we walk.

Through the valley. On our way. To the new heavens. And earth. Where everything. Will be put right. Habakkuk started this book.

By crying out. How long Lord. Must I call for help. But you. Don't. Listen. He finishes this book. Saying the following words. The sovereign Lord. Is my strength. What a transformation. What happened in between.

[30 : 25] To change his outlook. Well this is what happened. He saw. Sorry. He heard. All. That God did in the past.

And he worshipped. He saw. All that God would do. In the future. And he believed. Praise for the past. Faith for the future.

Leads to joy. For the journey. As we finish. I want to share with you. A song. Which came to my mind. As I was preparing this week.

And this is a song that. I sung as a boy. It's an old hymn. Some of you may. Know it. But I actually want to tell you first. The story of the songwriter. Because. When I looked up the song.

I saw the name of the songwriter. And I got interested. And basically. It's a very relevant story. So I'm going to share it. Her name was. Louisa Stead. That's a picture of her up on the board.

[31 : 22] She was born in England. She emigrated to America in 1871. And in 1873. She married George Stead. And the next year.

Their daughter was born. Then one day. Her husband tragically drowned. While saving the life of another person.

Louisa was left destitute. With a two-year-old daughter to care for. And no money to support her. In her painful struggle. She learned to trust.

In Jesus. And in his promise. To provide for her. One day at a time. And ultimately. In heaven forever.

And I just want you to. Listen. To the words that she wrote. Tis so sweet. To trust in Jesus. Just to take him.

[32 : 20] At his word. Just to rest. Upon his promise. And to know. Thus saith the Lord. Jesus.

Jesus. How I trust him. How I have proved him. Over and over. Jesus. Jesus. Precious Jesus. Oh for grace. To trust him. More. As we look back to the past in praise. And look forward to the future in faith.

We can find. Real joy. For the journey. Marked with pain. Let's pray. Amen. Lord.

We feel the pain. Of the struggle. That you have allowed to continue. In our lives. And for each one of us.

[33 : 25] There is some struggle. That you have chosen not to remove. Yet. And we feel weak. We hurt. We wonder why.

You haven't removed it yet. Oh Lord. We pray for the grace. To remember all the battles. That you have won for us.

Starting. With what Christ has done. On the cross. We also pray. For the grace. To trust you more. To rest.

On your promises. For the grace. For the grace. For the grace. For the grace. For the grace. And in all of this. We pray. For a joy. That really. Doesn't make sense. To the world around us. A joy that springs.

From praise. And faith. A solid joy. That lasts. Forever. Forever. Holy Spirit.

[34 : 27] We pray. That you would fill us. With that joy. As we praise. You for the past. And trust. In your promise. For the future. In Jesus name.

We pray. All of this. Amen. We're going to sing a song now. Called. God moves. In a mysterious way.

A lot of the imagery. That we read about here. About the exodus. Is actually. Reflected in this song. It's a song about God's sovereignty.

Over injustice. And pain. And our response to it. And I love the chorus of this. And it really sums up. What we've been talking about today. It says this. And I will try.