

Yet I will rejoice in the Lord

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[0 : 0 0] Lord, as you come to share your word now, open our eyes to your presence, our ears to your voice, speak into our minds and break into our thoughts, take hold of our hand and fill our hearts with your grace this very day we pray in Jesus name. Amen.

I'm Graham Lotz, the daughter of the late Billy Graham. He's a well-known author and speaker. A number of years ago she said, one of the things God has impressed on me is that we're living at the end of human history as we know it.

And she was trying to say, in light of this, God gave me the message I was to deliver, which was from Joel chapter 1, which says, the day of the Lord is at hand. It was a message warning that judgment was coming.

And then she added these words, this is all about calling God's people together to pray before it's too late and judgment falls on the world. I'm sure we all agree with her, the world is in trouble.

Friends, evil is running rampant in the world. Jesus must be glorified in our lives. We desperately need to have our eyes open to the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. One phrase of what I'm going, God said, stood out to me before it's too late.

[1 : 3 5] We must pray for God's mercy while we can. There's a time when judgment will come. And sooner or later we'll all face the consequences of the choices we have made. This is true for nations or individuals. We cannot mock God forever. We cannot ignore him or pretend he isn't there. We cannot do as we please without inviting judgment from on high.

We need God. We need God to do as we please without having us. We need God to do something before it's too late. Now that sounds a lot like Habakkuk. We discover in the book of Habakkuk, God told him clearly in chapters 1 and 2, judgment is coming. And now in a reading from chapter 3, Habakkuk at last understands the message.

And here in the book of Habakkuk.

Habakkuk.

Yet, as mentioned, Habakkuk, the mind has changed on the inside. How did that happen? This chapter gives us the answer. The outline is very clear. Habakkuk chapter 3 contains three main things for us to consider. A prayer, a vision, and a testimony.

[3 : 5 2] So what can we learn from the prophet's spiritual journey? Firstly, prayer, a prayer, a prayer, a prayer? Lord, I've heard of your fame.

I stand in all of your deeds, O Lord. Repeat them in our day. In our time, make them known. In wrath, remember mercy. In the face of impending calamity, the prophet prays for a full manifestation of God's power and for mercy in the midst of judgment.

It's as if he's saying, Lord, I know bad times are coming. I accept that. I'm not fighting against your plan. But O Lord, the hard times must come.

Don't let the Babylonians wipe us out. Remember mercy or we will perish. That's perfectly a biblical prayer. It's honest.

It's desperate. Notice that he asks God to do it again in his day, what he has done in the past. Renew them in our day and our time.

[4 : 57] Make them known. This ought to be the prayer of every thoughtful Christian at this critical moment of history. Consider the perilous situation, not just in Ukraine, Israel and Gaza, but in many, many parts of the world.

We truly live in dangerous times. Many Christians are asking what they can do. Some people say we're on the brink of a great revival.

Perhaps that is true. I certainly hope so. But I'm not sure about the timing. You know, when we read about the Lewis revival and the 1904 Welsh revival that spread around the world, it feels like stories from another planet.

Are such things possible in our day? It's easy to give into doubt when we consider the gravity of a world situation and what's happening in our land and within the church these days.

But you know, that may actually be a good sign. Because revivals usually come in desperate times. We generally don't receive a miracle until we desperately need one.

[6 : 17] It seems God often will not move in power until things have fallen into dire streets. If that is true, surely we're in a good place for a mighty move of God.

Revival is a sovereign work of God. He can move from heaven any time he wants. Fire comes down from up above. It's not worked up from below.

But if revival fire must come down from heaven, we can at least put the kindling in place. There's an old Chinese prayer that goes like this.

Oh Lord, change the world. Begin, I pray, with me. Friends, our greatest challenge is the person in the mirror. That's where revival must begin.

It must begin with you and me. Revival must begin in our hearts. We must pray for God's mercy. Secondly, vision.

[7 : 18] After this prayer, Habakkuk is a vision of God. Theologians call this a theophany. That's a fancy term for an appearance of God on earth.

In this case, God revealed himself to Habakkuk in something like a dream, a vision. The prophet recorded his experiences in verses 3 to 15.

These verses are highly poetic, which is what we would expect when a man has a vision of God. And the point is very clear. Knowing his nation faces in heaven and judgment, Habakkuk prays.

Lord, do something. This vision is God's answer. It's as if God is saying, Habakkuk, you've forgotten who I am. You're talking as if I can't hear you, as if I don't have any power.

Let me show you who I am. Because if you understand that, you'll be able to sleep at night. In these verses, Habakkuk recounts God's activity in the past.

[8 : 28] And he especially focuses on the Exodus here. The time in the wilderness, the crossing of the Jordan River. That was a period in which God repeatedly worked spectacular miracles.

By recounting all of us, God is saying, Have you forgotten what I did for you in the past? Friends, if God did it before, he can't do it again.

Sometimes, often, we read the Bible and secretly wonder if God can do it again in this century. And here's the answer.

He's God and he can intervene at any time he wants. We get a flavor of this vision in verses 13 to 15, which focus on the defeat of Pharaoh in the Red Sea.

Part of it says, You came out to deliver your people, to save your appointed one. You crushed the leader of the land of wickedness. You stripped him from head to feet. With his own spear, you pierced his head.

[9 : 36] Graphic words. Look at the verbs used here. You came out. You crushed. You stripped. You pierced. You trampled. This is what God did.

You can see two things very clearly here. The utter defeat of those who oppose God and the divine determination to do whatever it takes to deliver God's people.

God did it before and he can do it again. So we've looked at prayer, vision, and now thirdly, testimony. In verse 16, we hear about Habakkuk's acceptance.

He says, Yet, I will wait patiently for the day of calamity to come with a nation invading us. This is Habakkuk's way of saying, I understand it, Lord.

The Babylonians will attack us and then you will judge them. I will wait for that day to come. As it turns out, Habakkuk most likely didn't live long enough because Babylon would not fall for almost 70 years.

[10 : 49] But it doesn't matter. Habakkuk's words mean message received and understood. And then there's Habakkuk's commitment, verses 17 to 18.

These verses show us what faith looks like when life tumbles in around us. Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the field 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 Saviour.

The blossoms on the fig tree and the grapes forming on the vine refer to those things we are trusting in for days to come.

They're a symbol of our hopes for the future. It's just a bud, a blossom, just a flower. And yet, it's a tangible sign that the figs and the grapes are coming.

[12 : 02] But in this scenario here, there are no signs for the future. the fig tree does not bud. There are no grapes on the vine. There's no visible sign that these things will ever come to be.

Friends, do we have hopes and dreams for the future, but no visible signs that they will ever come to fruition? Do we ever feel like saying, God, please just give me a little sign, some type of hope that things are going to change?

Something to hold on to? If so, then we know how Habakkuk felt. All hope of future prosperity, all hope of brighter days ahead, seem to be gone.

In Habakkuk's situation, God's people had lost their savings, their reserves, all they had worked so hard to build up and to make matters worse. their current source of income was gone.

There was absolutely no sign that things were going to get better. There wasn't a single thing that pointed toward a brighter future or a better tomorrow.

[13 : 18] Their lives had absolutely come apart at the same. And we fully understand the impact of what had happened to Habakkuk and the rest of his Israelites.

What he says in verse 18, does not make sense, does it? He's saying, I've lost everything. My past, present, and future hopes are all gone.

I literally have nothing. But then what is he saying? Yet, I will rejoice in the Lord. I will be joyful in God, my Savior. I will be happy.

It doesn't sound quite right, does it? This just does not make sense because we tend to think being joyful is being happy until we realize joy is something entirely different from happiness.

Joy in the biblical context is not an emotion. Joy is attitude of the heart. it's not necessarily based on something positive, not me.

[14 : 25] Joy is something that lasts. Happiness is something that is temporary. When happiness fades away, joy can remain.

Joy is something that is bigger than you and me in the current circumstances. Joy brings us peace in the middle of a storm because the Lord is with us right through the storm and he upholds and strengthens us in the difficult times.

We need to ask the Savior to help us, comfort, strengthen and keep us. He is willing to lead us. He will carry us through. Should that not make us want to be joyful in the Lord?

Joy is something God puts into our heart through the Holy Spirit. The enemy tries everything in his power to steal our joy, to tempt us with things that will temporarily give us happiness but at the same time lift us away from the Lord.

Yes, there's a big difference between joy and happiness. Happiness is an emotion and temporary. Joy is an attitude of the heart.

[15 : 39] Friends, how do we need to be like Habakkuk and hold on tight to our joy? Earlier in chapters one and two, Habakkuk wasn't at all happy about what was happening in his life.

He cried out and complained very bluntly until Redfoot told God that he was not happy. But even though his life was falling apart all around him, he was still able to say, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Saviour.

Notice when his joy was found. It didn't come from his situation. It came from God. I will rejoice in the Lord and I will be joyful. In Habakkuk's life, God was the one thing that hadn't changed.

The Lord was the one and only constant in his life. He was the only sure thing that Habakkuk had. And it's the very same thing is true for us.

It's so easy for us to begin to trust in different things in our lives. But none of it is a sure thing. The only constant, the only sure thing we have is the Lord.

[16 : 58] That's why our source of joy has to be in Him. In Christ alone my hope is found. Hope in anything else will bring nothing but disappointment and pain.

Now look at what Habakkuk said in the very next verse, 19. The sovereign Lord is my strength. He makes my feet like the feet of a deer.

He enables me to go on the heights. Everything else had crumbled around him. But he knew his source of strength was God.

And too often we believe that everything depends on us. We try to fix our situation. We try to fix everything that's broken in our lives.

Friends, the bad news is we can't. You and I can't do anything on our own. We can only do it through the strength of the Lord.

[17 : 58] And we can have joy in the worst of circumstances because we know that God is stronger, so much stronger than our circumstances. He's bigger than our problems.

He's greater than our pain. He who is our Saviour, our strength will renew. Look over to Jesus. He will carry you through.

Whatever is happening in our lives right now, God is bigger than that. Whatever hurt we may have brought with us this morning, our God is greater than that.

But what do we do when we see no evidence of that truth? We might believe that God is almighty, all-powerful.

We believe he's bigger than our problems, bigger than our pain. But what do we do that there's no tangible evidence of that? Well, Habakkuk's answer is one word, wait.

[19 : 06] Verse 16, he said, yet I will wait patiently. And the prophet Jeremiah lived during the same time, experienced the same devastation that Habakkuk experienced.

In Lamentations 3, Jeremiah wrote, through the Lord's mercies, we are not concerned because his compassions fail not.

We are new every morning. Read us your faithfulness. The Lord is my portion, says my soul, therefore I hope in him.

The Lord is to those who wait for him. It is all who seeks him. It is good that one should hope and wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.

Friends, these days sometimes the only thing we can do is wait for the Lord. I realise this is not terribly comforting, but we are hurting right now.

[20 : 14] When we are hurting, we want belief, we want it quick, don't we? Unfortunately, God doesn't work like God. He's not like some fast-acting headache medicine.

He's promised to take away our heart, but he never promised to do it quickly. So there are seasons in our lives when the only option we have is waiting, but it doesn't feel good at the time when we're waiting for God.

It feels like we're doing nothing. It feels like we're waiting on empty promises from an absent God. And as we wait, we should be like Mary's letter.

Take all our concerns to God in prayer. Have we trials and temptations? Is there trouble anywhere? We should never be discouraged. Take it to the Lord in prayer.

And many here today probably know this all too well. We're waiting. We're waiting. But God isn't delivering.

[21 : 29] suffering. Some of us are just about waiting to throw in the towel. We feel we're waiting on something that's never going to happen. As difficult as it is, we need to remember that we have an incredibly limited perspective on the situation.

We can't see how this will eventually play out. We don't know the end of the story. we can't see past our present difficulties.

But God can. In John 13, Jesus was washing his disciples' feet. It was considered to be a job only for a servant or a slave, not for the Son of God.

When Jesus came to wash Peter's feet, Peter objected. There was no way he was going to let Jesus wash his feet. And here's what Jesus said to him.

Jesus replied, you do not realize now what I'm doing, but later, later, you will understand.

[22 : 39] Friends, the ways of God are above us. We don't always understand what he's doing at the time. Peter didn't realize that.

In the kingdom of God, the servant was the greatest of all. Jesus was doing something that Peter just couldn't comprehend at the time. If we're in a trying season of our lives, Jesus wants to carry an important truth for us.

There are many times in our lives when things just don't make sense. If our lives seem to be falling apart, there's no neat and tidy answer as to why it's happening.

we usually don't have the luxury of understanding why we're in a difficult situation. So in the absence of answers, we should remember the words of Jesus, you do not realize now what I'm doing, but later you will understand.

until the time of understanding, until the time of healing and restoration comes, the best scriptural advice we have is wait, keep praying.

[23 : 59] Sometimes the most spiritual things we can do is just get out of bed in the morning and struggle through another day. We need to keep hanging on until God delivers us from our present situation.

God is our healer. That doesn't mean we'll never battle illness. God is our comfort, but that doesn't mean we'll never contend with loneliness. God is our provider.

That doesn't exempt us from trials or tribulations, the struggles we're facing. Don't disprove God's promises. They're the very reason he made the promises to begin with.

His promises are that we will never experience pain. His promises are that it is temporary and in his time he will deliver us, he will heal us.

The question for us revolves around what we do in the meantime. Can we worship God in the midst of our difficulties? Can we praise him even when life doesn't make sense?

[25 : 04] Can we trust him enough to continue to give him glory while our lives seem to be falling apart? Listen again to the words of Habakkuk.

Though the fig tree does not bud, there are no grapes in 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 Saviour.

Friends, if you're here today and you know the Lord, if we've accepted Jesus as our Saviour, we can still have feet to tread on the heights of the worst moments of life.

We can stand when others fall around us. We'll never know that Jesus is all we need until Jesus is all we have. And when Jesus is all we have, then and only then will we discover that Jesus is all we need.

As we wait patiently in these days of uncertainty, may we be like Habakkuk and say, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Saviour.

[26 : 23] Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you for the truths that we have learned from your servant Habakkuk. Lord, let them not be wasted on us.

Lord, we believe without unbelief and help us to come to you by faith, for there's no other way of to trust and obey. Lord, we know that faith is a gift.

Oh, give it to us. Fill us with the faith of Jesus who loved us and gave himself for us. We pray that you would bless us and help us to rejoice and go with joy in our hearts for you.

In Jesus' name, hear our prayer. Amen.