

The Message of Habakkuk

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[0 : 01] Today we will preach from the book of Habakkuk.! The entire book, chapters 1 through 3, it might be a good idea to keep your Bible open.

If you don't know where it is, look at the table of content and that's going to direct you. But before we begin reading, I want to provide a bit of an introduction.

To this book and to this message. What is the message of Habakkuk?

What is the message of these three short chapters in the Old Testament? I believe the primary message of Habakkuk to believers is this.

Let us live in view of God's sovereignty. I think that's what Habakkuk is saying to us. Live life.

[1 : 39] Live in view of God's sovereignty. And as you hear this message today, as we listen to this message today, I pray that this expanded thought, which is derived from Habakkuk's saying, rings true to you.

And it says that believers should have faith in and joy in the Lord in good and bad times.

Believers should have faith in and joy in the Lord in good and in bad times.

Believers should have faith in and bad times. But what does it mean to live in view of God's sovereignty? And how do we do that?

What does it mean and how do we do that? John Piper, in his book, *Suffering and Sovereignty of God*, wrote these words.

[2 : 49] God is absolute. God is absolute and eternal and infinite. God is absolute.

God is eternal. God is infinite. He goes on to say, everything else and everybody else is dependent and finite and contingent.

God himself is the great supreme value. Everything else that has any value has it by connection to God.

God is supreme in all things. He has all authority, all power, all wisdom, and he is all good.

John Piper goes on to quote *Lamentation*. He says, he's all good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him.

[3 : 55] And his name as creator and redeemer and ruler of all is Jesus Christ. So when we speak of the sovereignty of God, we are talking about being about God who is absolute and eternal and infinite.

Who's all wise. Who's all knowing. Who's all powerful. And everything and everyone is derived from him. Everything that has value.

Everything that exists and has ever existed. God is sovereign. He is overall. He is that. Without God, there can be nothing.

Nothing happens outside of God's knowledge and his will. So since God is sovereign, how should you and I as believers live in view of that reality?

I think that's a fair question. Since God is sovereign, since God is everything. Since he's all wise.

[5 : 09] How should you and I live in view of that reality? Our view of the sovereignty of God should most certainly inform our attitude during suffering and during happy times as well.

Indeed, it should inform our attitude at all times. It should inform how we relate to each other in humility. It should inform how we love.

It should inform how we dispense justice. How we view the world. How we view ourselves in the world. All should be informed by the fact that God is sovereign.

He's over everything. God we serve. All, everything that we are, everything that we hope to be, should be informed by this sovereign, this big God who we cannot imagine, who is infinite.

All wise and all knowing. To live in view of God's sovereignty means that we live not only with an intellectual awareness that God exists and that he is sovereign.

[6 : 33] But it shapes our lives and is more important than the air we breathe, the water that we drink, and the food that we eat.

And in these three short chapters in the book of Habakkuk, we find an excellent case study of how we should live in view of God's sovereignty.

I believe Habakkuk teaches us that in view of God's sovereignty, we should do three things. This book, I believe, points us to do three very specific things in view of the fact that God is sovereign. Those three things are, number one, we should seek out the Lord. Seek out the Lord.

The second thing this book teaches us is that we should have faith in the Lord. And the third thing that this book, this account teaches us is that we should joy in the Lord.

[7 : 56] We should joy in the Lord. So just a little bit of background with respect to Habakkuk. Habakkuk. He's a prophet regarded as a minor prophet.

And he's believed to have been the contemporary of Jeremiah and lived around 600 BC. He prophesied the invasion and the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar.

Having received a clear word from the Lord. Let us now consider the first message that we can glean from this book, that we glean from this book in the Old Testament.

The first is this. In view of God's sovereignty, we should seek the Lord. In view of God's sovereignty, we should seek the Lord.

It just seems to make sense that you and I should seek, that we should search out, that we should get to know the heart of the Lord.

[9 : 14] Since he alone is sovereign, it seems to make sense. Let's see how Habakkuk approached this point. Verses 1 through 4 of chapter 1.

We find these words. Habakkuk chapter 1, verses 1 through 4. Habakkuk says, This is Habakkuk speaking to the Lord.

Oh, Lord, how long shall I cry for help and you will not hear? I'll cry to you violence and you will not save.

Why do you make me see iniquity? And why do you idly look at wrong? Destruction and violence are before me.

Strife and contention arise. Look at what he says further in verse 4. He's speaking now. Habakkuk is speaking about Israel. And he's saying to the Lord, These are the conditions that I'm living in and you see these things.

[10 : 27] And he says further in verse 4. So the Lord is paralyzed. And justice never goes forth. For the wicked surround the righteous.

So justice goes forth perverted. It almost seems like Habakkuk is describing the Bahamas in many, many ways.

And many places around the world. But we see that he sought the Lord with reverence.

He cries out to the Lord. Oh, Lord, how long shall I cry for help? Christ cries to the sovereign one.

The one who is in control of all things. In view of God's sovereignty, we should seek the Lord. Our prayers give evidence to the fact that we believe that God is able to do something about the thing that we bring to him.

[11 : 33] Our prayers remind us. It gives evidence that God is all-powerful and that we are weak.

In this instance, Habakkuk observes some issues with Israel. Observes some issues with the country that he lives in and he goes to the Lord.

He seeks the Lord because he's wondering, God, why is it that you are allowing these things to happen? He observed sin, wrongdoing, destruction, violence, strife and contention.

The law was paralyzed, useless. There was no justice. And Habakkuk said that wherever he went, it seemed the wicked outnumbered the righteous.

Justice. Justice is perverted. Habakkuk wondered how it was that the Lord, having seen all these things, was not moved to act.

[12 : 45] But in verses 5 through 11, the Lord responds to Habakkuk with an answer that the prophet did not want to hear.

So, having now gone to the Lord, making this plea to the Lord to do something about the problems, the sin of Israel, all the issues that he sees, the Lord responds.

And the Lord says to him, it's not that I'm not aware. I'm fully aware of what's happening in Israel.

Fully aware. And then moreover, the Lord says to him, that I have appointed the Babylonians. I have appointed a strong army to come in and to punish Israel.

That's the response. Habakkuk was not looking for that. That was not his solution. The Lord says, I'm going to cause this army, these strong men with horses, to come in and to invade the land.

[14 : 10] And what you think today is difficult. The pain that you see today, nothing can compare to it.

The Lord says to him, listen, if I just tell you about this thing, you won't believe it. Your eyes have to behold what you are about to witness. But he used the Babylonian army to punish Israel. You are going to be astounded with the word that the Lord used. And here it is, Habakkuk seeking the Lord as the sovereign God.

This was not the response Habakkuk expected. And so he continued in his prayer to the Lord. Verses 12 through 17 of chapter 1, Habakkuk continues.

There Habakkuk sought to make the case that God could not use the wicked to punish those who were more righteous than they. That was Habakkuk's point.

[15 : 31] Habakkuk, having gone to the Lord, and having complained to the Lord about the state of his country, and having heard the Lord's response that he would use a wicked nation to punish the people.

Habakkuk now goes back to the Lord and says, no, Lord, you are a just God. You can't look upon evil. How is it that you would use a more wicked people to punish us?

He said, you know, I guess Habakkuk is now saying, you know, we ain't that bad. You're bad, but we ain't as bad as them. Furthermore, he said to the Lord, it seems like your attitude towards your people is like a fisherman's attitude towards the fish he would catch.

Habakkuk. But Habakkuk now is engaging the Lord. Engaging the Lord because the Lord has now told him what is about to happen to Israel.

That Israel is about to be destroyed. That Jerusalem is about, in particular, is about to be destroyed. But I want us to see further as Habakkuk contends with and speaks with the sovereign Lord.

[17 : 01] In chapter 2, there's an important element we see here about Habakkuk's engagement with the Lord.

In verse 1, Habakkuk says, this is what he says in verse 1 of chapter 2, Habakkuk says, So here it is, Habakkuk is saying, having now made his case, having now made his case in response to the Lord's judgment, Habakkuk says, I'm going to wait to hear further what the Lord is going to say, what the sovereign Lord is going to say to me.

Habakkuk says, I'm going to wait. So he gives us this illustration, if you will, of one who stands in a tower and looks across the shore waiting for a response.

Habakkuk says, I am going to wait on a response from the Lord. And that's the way you and I ought to be. You and I, when we are confronted with difficulties in our lives, we ought to seek the Lord as Habakkuk did.

And we ought to wait for a response from the Lord as Habakkuk did in verse 1 of chapter 2.

Habakkuk said, I'm going to wait.

[18 : 44] I'm going to stand at my watch post and station myself on the tower and look out to see what the Lord will say to me and what I will answer concerning, and what I will answer concerning my complaint.

So there he is, standing and waiting for the sovereign Lord. Because God is sovereign, because he is all-powerful, because he is all-knowing, Habakkuk says, rightly, that I am going to wait on a response from the Lord.

How many of us lay out our case before the Lord but never wait for a response? Could it be that we really don't expect the response from the Lord?

Sometimes we pray and we ask the Lord to guide us in a particular situation. And right away, we go ahead and we make a decision.

But Habakkuk suggests to us that we ought to wait to hear from the Lord. We ought to wait to hear from the Lord. In view of God's sovereignty, we should have faith in the Lord.

[20 : 16] It seems to make sense that given the fact that God is sovereign, we should have faith in him. In chapters 2 and 3, we see the source and evolution of Habakkuk's faith.

So here it is. Habakkuk has been warned of the impending destruction, the place that he loves. And his heart is heavy.

His heart is heavy. The first thing we see in chapters 2 and 3 as it relates to Habakkuk's faith is the Lord giving Israel hope that they will emerge from under the grip of the invading army.

In chapter 2, verses 2 and 3, we read, And the Lord answered me. So having waited for the response, the Lord now, Habakkuk now gets a response.

And the Lord answered me. And the Lord says to Habakkuk, Write down the vision. Make it plain on tablets so he may run who reads it.

[21 : 36] For still the vision awaits its appointed time. It hastens to the end. It will not lie. If it seems slow, wait for it. It will surely come.

It will not delay. What the Lord is saying to Habakkuk is. That he wants Habakkuk to write down really the end of the story. He wants Habakkuk to make plain to those who will read what's going to happen in the end.

That though this invading army is going to come, that though Jerusalem is going to be destroyed, that he is going to punish, he is going to punish King Nebuchadnezzar.

And he is going to cause his people to rise up again. And he wants Habakkuk to make it plain, to run with it. To run. So he says, so that he who reads it may run with it.

And the Lord says further, look at what he says. The vision awaits its appointed time. It hastens to the end. It will not lie.

[22 : 43] It will not lie. So though it will seem as if the promise, though it seems as if the promise will not come to pass, he says, it certainly will.

It certainly will. Do not lose heart. For that thing which the Lord has promised will come to pass. It will surely come. And it will not delay.

The second thing we see is the Lord's command regarding our faith. Chapter 2, verse 4, the Lord says to Habakkuk, Behold, his soul is puffed up.

It is not upright within him, but the righteous shall live by faith. Habakkuk now faces an extreme circumstance, a very difficult situation.

A very difficult situation. Where this army is coming in to invade. And he understands that there is nothing that he can do, humanly speaking.

[23 : 55] Nothing that he can do. I don't know how many of you have had difficult circumstances in your life. But if you have had, or if you have now, then perhaps you are or were in the place where Habakkuk was.

And the word of the Lord to you as it was to Habakkuk is this, that the just shall live by faith. The just shall live by his faith.

The Lord says that the just shall not live by his sword. The just shall not live by his accomplishments. The just shall not live by his power.

But the just shall live by his faith. thirdly, having witnessed the sin and injustices that were everywhere in his country.

And having heard from God that he would use an even more unjust people to punish his fellow citizens, Habakkuk responds with a new faith perspective.

[25 : 11] perspective. Now Habakkuk's faith, his perspective is changing. I want you to see this because this is a big deal here. Habakkuk now having found himself in a position where he was despondent.

No doubt his head was down. He was feeling the weight of what the Lord had said to him. felt it all. Now Habakkuk's perspective is changing. What's the evidence of that and what does that look like? It's interesting to consider what informed his perspective and what were its manifestations.

You see, once perspective, the way you see something is very, very important. Perspective has to do with the way you see we look at things. It is the lenses through which we see something, perhaps the vantage point from which something is observed.

You do know that two people standing next to each other in the same place, for example, one looking north and one looking south, observe two completely different things.

[26 : 36] Same place, but they're looking in a different direction. Indeed, we could even draw the same conclusions about the place we are both looking at because of our expectation and other reasons as well.

We could hear the same thing based on our different views of the person who is speaking. We could hear a totally different thing.

perspective speaks to the way we filter things, the way we see things, and the way we regard things. Habakkuk perspective changes and we see it here in chapter two, in chapter three.

three, of this book, Habakkuk now, in chapter three, Habakkuk now sings to the Lord.

And in verse two, Habakkuk says to the Lord, Lord, have mercy, not justice. Look at what he says.

[27 : 52] in the midst of the years, revive it. In the midst of the years, make it new. In wrath, remember mercy. Habakkuk here now asks the Lord, rather than trying to make a case for himself, rather than seeking justice, rather than talking about the righteousness and the unrighteousness of people, Habakkuk now says, Lord, I want you to have mercy on us.

And I want you to have mercy. Habakkuk changes his perspective to that of seeking mercy. And then the second thing we see here regarding Habakkuk's perspective as he begins to sing and as he begins to pray, Habakkuk does something that is really, really important for all of us.

Habakkuk recalls and he recounts the history of God rescuing the people of Israel. Having been confronted, having been warned of what the Lord, of the judgment of the Lord, of the pain and the destruction that will be wrought on the people, and having been told that the Lord is at some point going to deliver them, Habakkuk's faith is informed by his recollection of God having delivered the people of Israel over so many years.

Habakkuk recalls the appearance of God on Mount Sinai. He recalls the plague in Egypt. He recalls the parting of the Red Sea. He recalls the Lord enabling Joshua's army as he defeated his enemies. He recalls all of these extraordinary things that the Lord did.

[29 : 57] And his recollection of these events, they all informed his faith. So Habakkuk was saying, listen, Lord, you did it before. I know you can do it again. And that's the word of the Lord for us today.

We can learn so much from what Habakkuk did. Very often, you and I, are going through difficult circumstances. And I believe that the word of the Lord to us today is that we need to recall, we ought to recall those times when the Lord delivered us.

Remember the times when you felt that there was no way you were going to get out of the marie clay, but he delivered you. You remember the times. Remember the time when you didn't think that that debt would be paid, but somehow he came through for you.

Remember the time when you were sick and he delivered you. You thought you would die and he delivered you. The Lord is saying to us that we can gain new perspective by considering our history with the sovereign Lord, considering the times that he delivered you.

And let me tell you something. As I consider this, I think it's a good idea for us that in sober moments for us to write down in point form what the Lord's done for us.

[31 : 13] Just make a note of it. And when it seems like the enemy comes in with a flood, we can go back and we can refer to it. Lord, I know you did this for me in September of last year.

You did X, Y, Z. And it's going to inform, it's going to build our faith in the Lord that it is the same sovereign God who delivered us in the past.

And he's going to do it again. Amen? He's going to do it again. Habakkuk allowed the history of his people to inform his faith.

And let me tell you something else. If you're here today, and strangely, if you can't recall any circumstance where the Lord delivered you miraculously, then you better talk to your mother or your father.

And you use, you say, Mom, tell me something. And I bet you she'll tell your couple. And you can say, Lord, you rescued Mama. Mama told me you rescued her.

[32 : 17] And you could use that. And you can let that inform your faith. Or you can talk to her friend. And you can say, listen, how did you make it through that circumstance that you were in? Your friend might say to you, listen, I had pain in my body.

I didn't know what I would do next. But the Lord gave me a song in my heart. The Lord enabled me to come through that. That too can inform your faith.

Because the Lord is no respecter of persons. You can remind him of that truth that is in his word.

What is the final lesson that we learn from Habakkuk?

In view of God's sovereignty, we should joy in the Lord. We should joy in the Lord and view the fact that God is sovereign.

We should find our joy in the Lord. Mindful that his country would be overrun by an invading army. Habakkuk acknowledges his fear.

[33 : 25] I want you to see this because oftentimes we beat ourselves up because we are afraid. But I want you to see what went through Habakkuk's mind.

look at how Habakkuk described his fear in verse 16 of chapter 3. Habakkuk says, I hear, that is having heard what the Lord saying to him about what is to come.

Habakkuk says, I hear and my body trembles. My lips quiver at the sound. Rottenness enters into my bones.

My legs tremble beneath me. This man is scared. Habakkuk says, my body trembles, my voice quibbles, rottenness enters in my bones.

He could hardly stand up, having heard what the Lord told him what happened. Let's face it, none of us likes bad news. None of us likes it.

[34 : 34] I don't want bad news, you don't want bad news. If you want bad news, let me recommend you to somebody. We don't like bad news. But I want you to see what happens to Habakkuk and how you and I can be informed and how you and I, how our lives can be shaped during times of difficulties.

Take a look at what Habakkuk says. In verses 17 through 17 and 18, Habakkuk says, Habakkuk writes, Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail, and the fields yield no food.

the flock be cut off from the fold, and there be no herd in the store. Look at what he says in verse 19.

Did you hear verse 18 properly? Habakkuk says that though all of these bad things are happening, though they happen, number one, two, three, four. And then he says in verse 18, yet, yet, yet, I will do what?

I'll be satisfied. Is that what he said? No, no, no. He didn't say that. He said, yet, I will rejoice in the Lord.

[36 : 05] I'll rejoice in the Lord. I shall take joy in the God of my salvation. I'll rejoice in the Lord. I'll take joy in the God of my salvation.

Yes, in view of God's sovereignty, we should joy in the Lord to make his point. Habakkuk does, notice, he does not say some things.

Habakkuk does not say, I'll find joy in knowledge of, in the knowledge of what I've come by. In other words, he didn't say, you know, well, I'm a big prophet now, I know what the Lord has said, so I'm going to have some joy in that.

He didn't say that. He didn't say, I'm going to find joy in my position as God's prophet. He didn't say that. He didn't say, notice, notice, notice, Habakkuk did not say, I will find joy because God will set me aside so that I am not harmed by what is to come.

Habakkuk doesn't say that either. He doesn't say that the Lord is going to shelter me under his wings. He doesn't say that. He doesn't say that at all.

[37 : 32] Habakkuk says, none of those things. In fact, he paints an entirely different picture. If the sovereign Lord permits famine, he says, I'll still have joy.

for us, that would be a recession and loss of job. No doubt, he could have added, Habakkuk could have added removal of life conveniences.

Habakkuk says, in the midst of whatever circumstance the sovereign Lord permits, whatever circumstance the sovereign Lord permits, I will rejoice in the Lord.

It is worth noting that he does not say that he will be satisfied or content in the Lord, which are okay, but, you know, they seem rather passive.

Instead, Habakkuk says he will rejoice. That is, he will exalt the Lord. He will praise the Lord. He will magnify the Lord. Clearly, the basis of Habakkuk's rejoicing and joy were not circumstantial.

[38 : 53] So what was it? What was it? What was his basis? Simply put, Habakkuk says, I take my joy in the God of my salvation.

Habakkuk's joy was anchored not to things, but to the God of his salvation. How many of us can say that today? How many of us today find our joy in our bank accounts or in our titles, in our positions, in our families, in our homes?

Habakkuk says, take it all away and I still got joy. He says, because my joy is anchored in the God who has my salvation in the palm of his hands.

Listen, you can't do anything with a Christian who really grabs a hold of this. There is nothing you can do to a man or a woman who grabs a hold of this truth.

Habakkuk had a long view of life, which is unlike most of us, most times, and the rest of us sometimes, what drives our ambitions.

[40 : 05] What is the source of our impatience? What is really behind the lack of our humility? Why don't we love as we should?

Could it be that we have not come to a place where we embrace God's sovereignty? Could it be that our religion does not have practical manifestations that others can see?

Let us come to a place in our lives where the things that happen, our conditions, things that are eternal, our external rather, let us come to a place in our lives where the things that happen, our conditions, things that are external, our disappointments, whatever they might be, the state of our nation, Lord help me, the state of our nation, and other things, let us come to a place where they do not bring us to a point of hopelessness and faithlessness.

Let us ask the Lord to grant us grace to have joy in the God of our salvation. We need the Holy Spirit's help though. We need his help because this ain't something we can muster of, I can tell you, because every time you try it, you're going to fall out on your face like I did so many times this week including this morning.

I don't know how many of you though, but let's go back to that point about the Holy Spirit. We need to constantly ask the Lord to help us, to help us with our joy so that we might have joy in the God of our salvation.

[41 : 57] You can just say just like God, grant us joy, joy in you. I don't know how many of you remember there was a song that we sang in the 90s and the chorus went something like this.

I still have joy. I still have joy. After all the things I've been through, I still have joy.

You remember that? I still have joy. I still have joy. Some of you know it. After all the things I've been through, I still have joy.

Let's sing it one more time. I still have joy. I still have joy. joy. After all the things I've been through, I still have joy.

Now the first verse of this song, which is not really familiar, which is certainly I didn't know it, but this is what the first verse of the song says. I've been tested. My faith has been tried.

[43 : 06] Satan has attempted to destroy my life. He's robbed, abused, accused, and stole. He's done everything he could do to conquer my soul.

And then it says, I still have joy. I still have joy. After all the things I've been through, I still have joy.

Now you got to sing with me, otherwise I'm going to sing. You'll have joy. I still have joy. After all the things I've been through, I still have joy.

Now we got to sing it one more time. And when we sing it this time, I really want you to sing it like you've got joy. And if you don't have it, as if you want to have it, you've got the faith for it. This time let's sing it and mean it.

thought so thought so thought so thought so thought so thought so! thought so! thought so I still have joy.

[44 : 12] I still have joy. After all the things I've been through, I still have joy. Habakkuk ends this book with these words.

God the Lord is my strength. Listen to what he says. God the Lord is my strength. He makes my feet like the deers.

He makes me shred on high places. And here Habakkuk repeats the words of Psalm 18.32.

Habakkuk makes plain that it is the Lord who is his strength.

And any victory he enjoys is because of the Lord. Any victory over life's circumstance that we enjoy is because of the Lord.

Any struggle or hard place he goes through without losing his joy. It's because of the Lord. It's the Lord. Habakkuk says that God makes his feet like the deers.

[45 : 22] You know what Habakkuk is saying? Habakkuk is saying, listen, God, you know, a deer just is able to run over rough places, mountains, and without sliding down.

And Habakkuk is saying that though life's struggles are hard, though I encounter difficulties in my life, the Lord makes my feet like deer's feet so that I can navigate life's circumstances, so that I can make it through.

He is my strength. He is the reason why I make it. Because he makes my feet like deer's feet so that I can tread on the high and the difficult places.

Perhaps you're a believer today, and you've heard this message, and you're saying that I'm not where I want to be.

Perhaps you don't have joy. You know, perhaps there's some circumstances that you have encountered or that you are facing right now that are just so hard, that are just so difficult.

[46 : 42] Not where you want to be. There's no joy in your salvation. Perhaps you say that the issues of life are overwhelming.

Guess what? I can't guarantee you that when you leave this place today that they're going to get better. I can't guarantee you that. That's not what this message, that's not the message of Habakkuk.

The message of Habakkuk is not that when you leave these doors that magically things are going to get better. That's a possibility. That's a possibility. Sure, absolutely. And I'd like to believe the Lord with you for that.

But if things don't get any better, I want you to have a yet in your life. I want you to get that.

No matter what. No matter what the circumstance. Because I can guarantee you that the God of your salvation, that he is aware of your circumstance as he was aware of Israel's condition.

[47 : 53] And he desires to give you joy in the midst of the storm that you're going through. That's what he desires to do. Let me tell you something.

Joy is something that you can't pay for. Some of the richest men and women in the world wish they had joy.

And they don't have it. And they are drinking and smoking and all kinds of stuff and engaging in all kinds of activities. Trying to find joy.

You can't pay for it. It's priceless. It's priceless. What a privilege you and I have today to be able to learn about and to be reminded about the God who is the joy of our salvation.

Priceless. Be richer than Bill Gates. Richer than he is. We still have joy. After all the things I've been through, I still have joy.

[49 : 02] After all the things I've been through. Whatever it is. But what if you're not a believer today? Well, if you're not a believer today, what you have heard is something that you cannot embrace.

You must first be saved. You see, having joy in the midst of trying circumstances, especially those you can't change, is the children's bread.

It belongs to the children of God. But guess what? You too consider the table. You too consider the table. There is room.

There's a space at the table for you. And so, as the Holy Spirit knocks on the door of your heart, do not harden your heart, but instead, instead, let him in.

Amen? Amen. Master, praise came to come now. Yes.