

# "Joy At All Times"

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[ 0 : 00 ]     Trusting God in Troubled Times. This is the title of the sermon series we've been in, in the book of Habakkuk. And we want to, we're going to wrap it up today.

Matt Saracen, your answer, your wish is going to be fulfilled. Next week we're going to begin a series in the book of Revelation. So if you want to read ahead, that's what we're doing. We'll be looking at the first couple of chapters between now and the end of the year.

And then we'll come back in January and do the bulk of the book after January, or after Christmas. So, but as we wrap up Habakkuk, trusting God in troubled times.

And if you haven't been here before, I just want to recap. The troubled times that Habakkuk was facing were pretty dire, right? First, the unrighteous were wreaking havoc in God's own people, their own leadership.

was corrupt and was oppressing people. And so Habakkuk begins the book by crying out to God, God, please do something. Please act. Respond.

[ 1 : 05 ]     Bring your righteousness to bear on this. And God says, I will. But it's going to be harsh. It's going to be pretty severe. This unrighteousness won't last forever.

I'm going to bring Babylon to bring judgment on the people. And so then the second part of Habakkuk is him saying, okay, that's good. But God, how can you use an unrighteous instrument like Babylon to judge your own people?

This doesn't make any sense. And God responds by saying, though it might look like they're winning now, they won't win forever. Unrighteousness will not win in any case.

I am a just God, and I will respond to evil. And the righteous shall live by faith. And that's what Pastor Nick talked to us last week about.

And before we go on and look at Habakkuk 3, I just want to stop and think about the troubles. I don't know what kind of troubled times you may be facing this morning.

[ 2 : 10 ]     My guess is they're feeling fairly unlike the ones that Habakkuk used. Maybe not. Certainly we have faced our own share of troubles in this day.

I don't even need to list them. Pandemic, social strife and unrest, wars in the world, political conflict, racism, sex trafficking, opium crisis, economic uncertainty, and more and more and more.

And that's on the global scale. And then on a personal scale, as I look around the room, I know many of you have had your own troubled times. Whether they be health crises, relational breakdowns, loss of security, various kinds, jobs, money, hopes and dreams dashed.

You've had your own troubled times. How do we face those? This is what Habakkuk 3 tells us.

How do we face these troubled times? And in it, there is a beautiful expression. You'll see when we get to verse 18, it's a verse you've heard many times. But my hope is that you'll see it in the context of the whole book of Habakkuk to see how precious and beautiful it is as he expresses trust in God in the midst of troubled times.

[ 3 : 27 ] So, if you want to turn with me to the book of Habakkuk, in the Pew Bibles, it's page 738 is where we're going to be. We're going to be looking at Habakkuk chapter 3 today.

So, I need to find it as well. There it is. Okay. Habakkuk chapter 3. We're going to read and then we're going to pray and then we'll look at it for a few minutes together.

A prayer of Habakkuk, the prophet, according to Shigionath. O Lord, I have heard the report of you and your work, O Lord, do I fear.

In the midst of the years, revive it. In the midst of the years, make it known. In wrath, remember mercy. God came from Teman and the Holy One from Mount Paran.

His splendor covered the heavens and the earth was full of his praise. His brightness was like the light, rays flashed from his hand and there he veiled his power.

[ 4 : 32 ] Before him went pestilence and plague followed at his heels. He stood and measured the earth. He looked and shook the nations. Then the eternal mountains were scattered. The everlasting hills sank low.

His were the everlasting ways. I saw the tents of Kushan in affliction. The curtains of the land of Midian did tremble. Was your wrath against the rivers, O Lord?

Was your anger against the rivers or your indignation against the sea when you rode on your horses or your chariots of salvation? You stripped the sheath from your bow, calling for many arrows.

You split the earth with rivers. The mountains saw you and writhed. The raging waters swept on. The deep gave forth its voice.

It lifted its hands on high. The sun and moon stood still in their place at the light of your arrows as they sped, at the flash of your glittering spear. You marched through the earth in fury.

[ 5 : 36 ] You threshed the nations in anger. You went out for the salvation of your people, for the salvation of your anointed. You crushed the head of the house of the wicked, laying him bare from thigh to neck.

You pierced with his own arrows the head of his warriors, who came like a whirlwind to scatter me. Rejoicing as if to devour the poor in secret, you trampled the sea with your horses, the surging of mighty waters.

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

My legs tremble beneath me. Yet I will quietly wait for the day of trouble to come upon people who invade us. 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 flocks be cut off from the field, and there be no herd in the stalls. Yet I will rejoice in the Lord. I will take joy in the God of my salvation.

[ 6 : 52 ] God, the Lord, is my strength. He makes my feet like the deer's. He makes me to tread on my high places. This is to the choir master with stringed instruments.

Let's pray together. God, we thank you for this word. We thank you that you have spoken in various times, in various ways, Lord, through history, through people.

And yet, Lord, in all of these things, you present a consistent witness of who you are and what you are doing in this world, so that we might know you.

So we might not have to grasp or imagine or conjecture, but so that we might be able to read your word and know the kind of God you are. Lord, be with us this morning as we read through this.

We pray that you will help us to understand it. Lord, give us clarity of thought. Give us tenderness of heart. Lord, give us willingness of spirit to receive your word.

[ 7 : 56 ] Lord, I ask for your help that you would help me this morning to speak your word as I ought. Lord, we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. So we've talked about troubled times.

And what I want to present to you this morning is this hypothesis or this. This is my thesis today. That knowing God is the most important thing as you face troubled times.

Knowing God is the most important thing facing troubled times. I think this is what Habakkuk wants us to see. So as we're going to look at this, the passage breaks down into kind of two sections.

The first is, what did Habakkuk know about God? And then secondly, how did Habakkuk respond in light of what he knew about God? How is it that his knowledge of God helped him in troubled times?

So this is what we're going to look at this morning, if you're taking your notes. So our first point then, what did Habakkuk know about God? This is the first 15 chapters of this. And we just want to note at the very beginning, this chapter is unlike the other two.

[ 9 : 01 ] The other two felt like prophetic oracles. It was a conversation between Habakkuk and God. Then we get to this one and suddenly the form changes. This actually feels and looks like a psalm.

And in fact, it's not. And it says in verse 1 that it's a prayer, that this is a prayer of Habakkuk to God, responding to what he's heard and seen in the first two chapters.

It's also a song because you see the musical notations, you see the final comment. So we want to think about this as a response that Habakkuk is embodying himself personally and helping us to embody as well.

So what does he know about God? Verse 2 says, I have heard the report and your work, O Lord, do I fear. Now he does not then expound specifically on this, but I just want to remind us, what is the report that Habakkuk would know of the works of God in the world?

If he went back and he read the books of Moses, if he went back and he looked at the stories, what would he remember? He would remember things like, God is a God who has delivered his people from slavery to a greater nation, Egypt.

[ 10 : 18 ] God worked powerfully through plagues and through parting the Red Sea and overcoming armies greater than they could have defeated on their own in order to deliver and to save his people from that slavery.

And then he led them through the wilderness. And in that wilderness, he revealed himself. Remember, he revealed himself on Mount Sinai. And he came with thunder and lightning and trembling and earthquakes on the mountain as he revealed himself to Moses and gave the Ten Commandments and much more of the law.

Remember, during that time as well, he defeated the enemies that sought to block God's people, the kings of Sihon and Og, if you remember these. But then he also judged his own people when they failed him, whether it be the golden calf at the foot of Mount Sinai or whether it be other times when they grumbled and complained and said, God, you're not going to provide.

And he brought judgment to purify them and to help them see that they were, that he was a God who was going to care for them. And then finally, we would know that Habakkuk would remember that at the end of the wandering in the wilderness, then God brought them up into the promised land.

He literally stopped the Jordan River so that the million of people plus could cross the Jordan River into the promised land. And then he gave them favor and power to overcome the enemies, sometimes through military might, but more often through miraculous ways where God showed his power to defeat the enemies of God's people.

[ 11 : 58 ] And through all of this story, Habakkuk would remember that the God that he knows is a God who triumphs over his enemies and who has power over creation.

And this is what Habakkuk 3 through 15 shows us. Look with me at it. It talks about how he is triumphing over his enemies.

There are historical references. Timon and Mount Paran are on the Sinai Peninsula. The tents of Cushion and Midian are people who lived in the Arabic countries to the southeast of Israel.

And these were people who God's, Israel had to go through on their way to the promised land. So he's reminding them, I have brought you victory over these things.

And then as Habakkuk continues to talk about God, he talks about them in military images. These pictures of power and might riding on chariots and horses, trampling them, unsheathing bows and arrows and piercing them with arrows.

[ 13 : 02 ] He uses his image in verse 12 of threshing the nations. Now, I don't know, has anyone ever seen threshing actually happen? Yeah, Scott has. So it doesn't happen very often.

Threshing is when you gather sheaves of grain and you put them on a hard surface. And then those sheaves of grain are beaten in various ways, right? And it might be with a hard stick or it might be oxen dragging these humongous blocks that are weighty.

And they just roll this stuff over these sheaves of grain. And the purpose is to break down and separate out the good from the bad. The stalks, the husks, all those things.

Maybe they have other uses, but what's really wanted in the grain is the kernel. And so the threshing separates these things out. And Habakkuk remembers, God has done this with his enemies.

God has done this with the peoples of the earth. He is going to bring this judgment and power to separate out, to sort out God's people from those who would oppose him.

[ 14 : 16 ] In all these things, God shows his power over his unrighteous opponents. But he doesn't just say that in this section. He also talks about his power over natural forces.

Verse 3 is this picture of his radiance, which is like the sun and the moon. Verse 4 talks about brightness was his power. As you keep going through the two immovable powers in the ancient world.

And even today, if you think about it, the mountains and the water, right? We've learned a lot about how water is unstoppable. When it rains too much, floods happen.

When the hurricanes blow the sea onto the shore, there is nothing that stops these powers. And yet, what it says here is these things are laid low. The eternal mountains are laid low by the coming of God, making a way for his people.

The rivers and the seas that he showed his power over, he trampled them with their horses. It says, verse 10 says, The mountains writhed and the raging waters convulsed at the coming of God.

[ 15 : 26 ] Now, what you may not think about is that in the world that Habakkuk lived, those around him, the Canaanites, the Babylonians, they all had gods connected to these earthly features.

And they would worship these gods, and they would try to appease these gods so that the mountain might not fall on them, or so that the floods might not come, or so that the rain would fall. And all of Habakkuk's imagery is to remind Habakkuk and his people that God is a God who is above all other gods.

All of these small G gods, the God of the river, and the God of the sea, and the God of the mountain, the God of the harvest, whatever it is, they are nothing compared to the God of the Bible who says, I have power over all of these things, and they quake in my presence.

Nations threaten you, I will defeat them. Nations that exile you, I will overcome them. The forces that you think are beyond your control, they are beyond your control, but I will control them.

I will hold them. And God comes in the midst of it, and he reminds them in verse 8 and verse 13 that he is the God who is able to deliver his people from these threats.

[ 16 : 57 ] He is able to save them for his glory. Friends, I wonder, do you believe what Habakkuk has seen about God?

Do you believe that God actually has power over the greatest enemy that you face in your life today? Whether it be the external forces of society, whether it be individual people who actually hate you or oppose you for your faith, whether it be the forces of unrighteousness in your own heart, do you believe that God is greater than these things?

Do you believe that when trouble comes upon you, that God is not out of control or unable, but that he is still a God who is strong enough to do all of these things?

Friends, here's the amazing thing about Habakkuk. He knew these things from Revelation that God gave him. He knew these things from the history of what God had done in Israel.

But we as a church sit on the other side of the greatest victory in all of human history. Because the Son of God took on human flesh and entered into this broken world so that he might ultimately be the true deliverer from our greatest enemies, which are not the forces of society, but are ultimately sin and death.

[ 18 : 40 ] And Jesus came and he went to the cross. And do you remember what the gospel writers say about what happened at the cross? When Jesus died, the earth quaked and the sky went dark.

Even the creation convulsed at this work of victory. Because it wasn't just that Jesus died, but then that he rose again from the dead to show that he had power over sin and death.

So that we might say as Christians, there is no weapon formed against us. There is no enemy. There is no power in our world that can overcome God, our Savior.

He has overcome them for us, ultimately, truly, fully. Jesus comes to us today and he says, I am the victorious one.

When you join with me by faith, remember that in the resurrection, the victory is already won. And friends, isn't this exciting?

[ 19 : 49 ] We're going to preach on revelation. And by next spring, you're going to be so amazed at how many ways God is reminding us that at the end, his kingdom will be forever.

What we just sang, that God's kingdom will be the one that will stand when all other things fall. He will bring righteousness and judgment and justice to the world and he will save his people to be with him in his kingdom forever.

And this is the God we need to see in times of trouble. This is the God that Habakkuk saw in the sixth century BC. And when he saw him, he responded.

And this is what the second half of this passage shows us. How did Habakkuk respond to trouble in light of what he knew about God? Well, I think there are three things.

There are actually six, but I'm going to try to combine them because this is an incredibly rich passage. And verse two has tons of stuff that I'm kind of just skipping over.

[ 20 : 58 ] I'm just going to admit that. Come talk to me afterwards if you want to talk about it. Three ways in which Habakkuk responded in light of what he knew about God. First, verse 16.

I hear and my body trembles. My lips quiver at the sound. Rottenness enters into my bones. My legs tremble beneath me. Have you ever been in the presence of a power that's so great that it literally makes you quiver and shake?

The closest thing I can think of is a natural power. If you ever go to Niagara Falls, I highly recommend taking the opportunity to go down because when you see it from the top, it's really cool.

It's beautiful. You go to the bottom and you feel the power. The whole ground shakes because of the volume of water that's falling in Niagara Falls.

And it's amazing. So don't miss that. Either on the Canadian side or on the American side. You can both do it. Do it on either side. It's wonderful, right?

[ 22 : 00 ] This is what Habakkuk is saying. When I see God this way, I realize I'm so small and he's great and I tremble. But that trembling is not a subservient, abject horror of God, but it is a recognition and an awe of a power much greater than him.

And because of that, then he says at the end of verse 16, yet I will quietly wait, wait to see God do what he's going to do.

And friends, this is one of the hardest things about this, isn't it? Because we love a picture of a big God who's going to come and trample over all the enemies and win. We want to be there.

But we want, you know, if you're a baseball fan, you're like, but I want to be there in October. I want to be there, you know, next month when I can see the victory and the championship. But Habakkuk says, no, we have to wait.

We have to wait for God in his sovereignty and his timing to bring what we long for. And friends, we need to recognize that God doesn't work on our time.

[ 23 : 21 ] He doesn't come and rescue us from our circumstances when we want him to sometimes, does he? He doesn't act to change or remove those who oppose us in our faith.

We need to recognize that we can wait. Partly because Romans 5, 6 says this, for while we were still weak, at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly.

If God has all power to do all these things, can we trust him that his timing is going to be right?

Can we wait, not with resignation, not with despair, but with hope and confidence and steadfastness that God will do it?

So Habakkuk challenges this. And it's kind of, it's remarkable because he goes on in verse 17, right?

[ 24 : 31 ] And verse 17 says, I will do this even when I don't see you at work. I don't see you providing, right?

Though the fig tree should not blossom, no fruit beyond the vines, the produce of the olive fail in the fields, yield no food, the flocks be cut off from the fields and there be no herd in the stall.

Remember what Habakkuk saw. He saw God and his promises, but did he ever see the fulfillment of it? Well, he saw Babylon, we think, probably.

He saw Babylon come and bring judgment on Judah. But it is extremely unlikely that Habakkuk lived long enough to see the fall of the Babylonian Empire 70 years after that.

Habakkuk never saw the victory. He never saw the restoration. He never saw God bringing back his people from exile and the rebuilding of the temple, let alone seeing Jesus, the Son of God, come and defeat sin and death on the cross and in the resurrection.

[ 25 : 40 ] Can we wait? But we don't just wait because verse 18 tells us the second, yet I will.

The first, yet I will, in spite of what I see, yet I will wait. The second one is, yet I will rejoice. I will rejoice.

And we need to do this carefully. I don't have to rejoice in my suffering. I don't have to rejoice in my enemy. I don't have to say cancer is good.

I don't have to say this war is a blessing. We can say, no, this is evil. These are bad things. These are contrary. These are forces that run against God and his kingdom.

But Habakkuk says, yet I will rejoice in the Lord. The Lord with, if you look in the ESV, it's all those little capitals, right?

[ 26 : 47 ] The Lord Yahweh. The Lord who is the covenant-keeping God. The Lord who revealed himself to Moses and delivered his people then. Yet I will rejoice in the Lord.

I will take joy in the God of my salvation. When we're in the middle of troubled time, Habakkuk points us not to look at our troubles, but to look at the God who is over all these things.

There's an old, old worship song. Some of you who are over 40 may remember it. God is too wise to be mistaken. God is too good to be unkind.

So when you don't understand, when you don't see his plan, when you can't trace his hand, trust his heart. Rejoice that there is a God in heaven who has all power to make things right.

Rejoice that he has done the most amazing thing in sending in love his own son to die not only for the individual salvation of us, but ultimately for the renewal, the restoration, the redemption of the whole creation when it will be restored.

[ 28 : 15 ] Again, Revelation is coming. Revelation 21 is hanging out there waiting for us when the new heavens and the new earth will be made and there will be no more sin and no more sickness and no more tears and no more dying because he has come and his redemption will be complete.

And in this God we can rejoice even now because what is coming in the future which is based on what has already happened in the past can help us in our present time to rejoice in God who loves us.

If you don't know who Johnny Erickson Tata is, you need to. She's a remarkable woman.

She's lived now for over 50 years with quadriplegia. It came through an accident when she was in high school. 10 or 15 years ago she also battled cancer.

She's not lived an easy life. And she has pled to God, God save me from this trouble. God deliver me from this affliction and I will praise you.

[ 29 : 28 ] And God has said no, wait. God has said I want to use this for your glory. And you know what's the most remarkable thing about her?

She's one of the most joyful people. I've never met her in person but you see her in interviews. You see her in other places. Do you know what she loves to do almost more than anything else?

She loves to sing. She loves to sing the old hymns. She loves to lift up her voice and praise God. This woman who's lived in a wheelchair her whole life who can't feed herself, who can't get in or out of bed, who can't do anything for herself.

And yet what she loves to do is to sing. And we have so much to learn from her about how to take joy in the Lord in the midst of our trials.

Habakkuk says, we can do this. I will rejoice in the God of my salvation. And then finally, verse 19, Habakkuk responds with waiting.

[ 30 : 36 ] He responds with rejoicing. And then verse 19, he responds with trusting. With trusting faith. Habakkuk says, despite all that I see, despite all the troubles that I'm in the midst of right now, I am confident God will carry me through.

He will be my strength. And that doesn't mean that he doesn't feel weak. The whole picture in Scripture of strength is that we feel weakness and God displays his strength through it.

So don't think that knowing that God is our strength means that we're always going to feel great. We won't. We will feel weak and unable and overcome and overwhelmed. And it's that point when we turn to God, when we trust in God, when we remember God, he says, I will take care of you.

I will be your strength. Not only that, but that he will secure our footsteps. I don't know if you've ever seen mountain goats leap from ledges that are smaller than we could even probably see half the time with their naked eyes.

They leap up these sheer faces that we would be terrified to even be on. We would want harnesses and ropes and tons of pitons and a belay guy to make sure that we don't fall to our death.

[ 32 : 01 ] And Habakkuk says, that's what it feels like in these troubled times and yet God makes our feet like the mountain goats. He will secure our steps.

We won't slip and fall and die even though we're terrified. He will not let our foot slip. He will not abandon us to the enemies around us, the troubles that come that threaten to overwhelm us.

In the end, they will not do it because he, the Lord, is our strength and he sets our feet on the heights like the mountain goats.

and friends, we know this again because Romans 5 tells us that it is the grace of God through Jesus Christ that we are now able to stand.

That's where our feet are secure because we know that Jesus has made us his own and we stand in that place no matter what comes at us and we can stand firm.

[ 33 : 07 ] Not because we have great footwork but because he has made our feet secure. And this is what Habakkuk has for us. This is the God that he wants us to see this morning to remind us that this is the God of the Bible.

this is what the Christian God is and how it can be our help in troubled times. Let's pray. Lord, thank you for this time.

I thank you for your word and I pray, Lord, that you would help us. Lord, today, as we go from here, Lord, help us to meditate on you and who you are and what you have done.

Lord, we are so often distracted and we set our hearts and our minds and our thoughts and our gaze upon other things. Lord, help us to set our gaze upon you this morning, this afternoon, and this coming week.

Lord, that we would be those who are filled with hearts that are willing to wait and glad and rejoicing and steadfast in faith.

[ 34 : 34 ] We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

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Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Thank you.

[ 35 : 54 ] Thank you.

Thank you.