

Wanting more of God - In wrath, remember mercy!

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[0 : 0 0] Good morning, everyone. I pray that the Lord's word will actually touch your hearts and make some changes in your life.! Why else would we listen to it? Why else would we read it? Amen?

! Oh, that was a half-hearted amen. Amen? Oh, that's better. We're awake. We're talking about wanting more of God in wrath, remember mercy.

And we're in Habakkuk 3. Now, we've been through Habakkuk 1 and 2, for those that have been with us for the last two weeks. And we've heard Habakkuk's rail at God, his wrestle at God with what was going on in Israel at this time.

And now we're entering into a time of prayer with him. And Rick Warren is quoted as saying, You don't realize God is all you need until God is all you have.

And this passage is wanting about more of God in the most unexpected, inexplicable times of our lives. It's praying for his mercy in the midst of it all, too.

[1 : 0 6] And when we're least inclined to pick up our Bibles, that is when we need to pick them up more and read the promises of his word. When our prayer life seems so barren, and we're spiritually dry, and we've reached that part, and most of us in this room, if anybody hasn't, I'd like to know how you haven't at one time in your life.

But some of us have reached that spiritually dry, barren time, when our prayers just seem dry. And we're called in Thessalonians 5.17 to go to God without ceasing, pray to him.

That means touch base with him, contact with him, because it's a relationship that he wants with us. You know, we talked about the persecuted church, and they faced the unimaginable.

What Mike and I saw was unimaginable. I won't even tell you about it, because it's just not nice. And we would think that they would run away from God and think, you know what, I'll just give up, because I'm under this persecution.

But they don't. They run toward him. They have Hebrew's faith, that faith that says things that are not seen, but they have the evidence of, they have that trust in God.

[2 : 1 8] And it is a trust. It really is a trust. It's not just a, I believe, an airy-fairy belief. It's a trust, a deep, a knowing trust that the God that they serve has provided his mercy and wrath before, and he's going to do it again.

And for them. And that's why the Bible tells us to seek God with all our hearts, our minds, and our souls. Why our souls? Because that is what's going to go and meet Jesus in heaven.

That's the prize of being a Christian in the first place. Why our hearts? Because it's the wellspring of our life. If we empty our hearts of God, we empty our hearts of what goodness.

Am I still on? Is it? Yeah. We empty our hearts of what goodness there is within us. We need to hold on to Jesus Christ and keep that water of our hearts full.

We've got some crackling there, guys. We need to saturate ourselves in his promises, don't we? We need to saturate ourselves in his word when we're feeling a bit dried up so that we can saturate ourselves in his love.

[3 : 28] Why the mind? Because the mind is the place where we imagine the worst, and then fear holds back faith. But you know what? If you have faith, that holds back fear.

Do I move this away? The wire. Okay. I'm going to do this because otherwise it will be irritating us all the way. There you go.

Thank you. Otherwise, we'll just have this in all the time and it's not worth it. So the mind is so important to keep control of. Romans 12 says, keep our minds renewed in Christ.

If we keep our minds renewed in Christ, we will be able to fight those times of fear. When we're laid in bed thinking in the night, worrying ourselves silly over the things that we shouldn't worry about, but we do.

When the things that we should be worried about, but we should, actually hand them to God anyway, because he will deal with it far better than we can. Isn't that true? So when we're faced with wrath, when we're faced with trouble, we need to seek God.

[4 : 37] That is what Habakkuk did. He had his talk to God and now he's seeking God in this prayer. And he's saying, in your wrath, remember mercy. So I'm going to read from verse one now.

A prayer of Habakkuk, the prophet, and Shigainoth. 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 and the Holy One from Mount Paran. And then we have a break. And this is where, in this particular prayer, it actually is a pause, but it's also a build of emotion.

So imagine, I'm not going to do it, but imagine Habakkuk getting really emotional here now. As Andy said, he wrestled with God. And he wrestled with God with this prayer. His glory covers the heavens and his praise filled the earth.

His splendor was like the sunrise. Rays flashed from his hand where his power was hidden. You know, this prayer was a song. Just like David sang his songs.

[5 : 44] In 2 Samuel 6.14, I think it is, David was actually praising God and lifting up his skirts and dancing because he was bringing the Ark of the Covenant into Jerusalem. He was full of joy at that time.

And he loved a good sing. He loved a good play of the music to just share in his joy in the Lord. But equally, in Psalm 7, this psalm that David prayed and sang echoed Habakkuk's prayer and song.

It was disjointed. It was loud. It was seeking for God's justice in a time wherein justice was big and rife. That's what shigionoth means.

Shigion from the Hebrew. It means that it was loud, disjointed, and there were funny odd breaks in there that you just didn't understand why. There were radical ways of expressing themselves to God in the unexpected and the inexplicable times.

David and Habakkuk were real and they cried out to God for justice in the injustice they were witnessing. Knowing and not fully understanding why God was going to hit the nation of Israel with exile and he's going to also get hold of Babylon.

[7 : 03] Habakkuk still wanted God's choice of justice. I wonder how many of us would like that. We try all we want, don't we, to put our form of justice in there. But God's justice is very, very different from ours, as you'll see as I go on.

And he wanted God's choice of justice even if it meant his wrath. Habakkuk was calling out to God to repeat his mercy in their day and in that wrath, which meant extreme anger.

You know, at this point I can actually say I think God was royally fed up with the Israelites. When he was royally fed up, Habakkuk said, will he remember your mercy?

Please? Because we know what God's wrath can be like. Habakkuk's prayer is a prayer of expressing strong faith to God in these trials because he could recount the numerous times that God actually did provide his mercy in the midst of his wrath.

I'm going to carry on from verse 5 where Habakkuk recounts these times. Plague went before him. Pestilence followed his steps. He stood and shook the earth.

[8 : 14] 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 Kushan 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 into victory, you uncovered your bow and you called for many arrows.

And this is where one of those funny breaks comes in. And you can imagine he probably needs a breather if he's singing this in a loud, disjointed way, can't you? As he goes on, he says, You split the earth with rivers.

The mountains saw you and writhed. Torrents of water swept by. The deep roared and it lifted its waves on high. 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. In anger you threshed the nations. You came out to deliver your people, to save your anointed one. You crushed the leader of the land of wickedness.

[9 : 22] You stripped him from head to foot. And another breather. With this, with his own spear, you pierced his head. When his warriors stormed out to scatter us, gloating as though about to divide the wretched who were in hiding, you trampled the sea with your horses, churning great waters.

Now these words of Habakkuk's prayer seem a bit chaotic, don't they? The word Shigayanon means dithyrambic. It means out of sync. There's no rhythm to it.

And I feel like there's almost kind of no rhythm to this poem or this song here. And it demonstrates God's wrath in the ways of injustice that seemed so high and impenetrable at times through the Israelites' life.

But it's rich with God's power and mercy for his chosen nation. And it demonstrates that God uses the unexpected and the unexplicable to save his people too.

Habakkuk's prayer demonstrated and recognized God's mercy in the midst of his wrath. We look at the rivers and the seas, tempestuous, raging, deep, torrential, rivers splitting, the land divided.

[10 : 36] What does that depict? Possibly Noah's flood. Can you imagine that flood? It wasn't the pitter-patter of rain. It wasn't little April showers. It hosed it down.

And it was the first rain that they ever experienced. It would have been a massive shock. This was unexpected and inexplicable. They'd never seen rain before. The wells filled up.

The land filled up. And it was a flood. But God was getting rid of sin. The world had become corrupt. And they weren't going to listen. So he had to get rid of all that sin and save the good.

We look at God's power in Exodus with the Israelites in Egypt. We see that Habakkuk wrote about plagues and pestilence that actually fell on Israel's captives.

Now I can't imagine that Pharaoh or even the Israelites would have thought that gnats and flies and dead cows and in the end, dead firstborn would get them out of Israel, out of Egypt.

[11 : 41] They wouldn't have expected it. It was the unexpected and the inexplicable. For time and time ahead, I am sure people are going to try and find out why and how that happened and put our own slant to that.

But God made that happen. God put those plagues in place because Israel needed saving from their captives. They needed saving from injustice. We see God's power in war.

When the sun and the moon were commanded to stand still, we know that that was the time when Joshua and his army was allowed to complete their victory. And that was in Joshua 10.

It's equally rich with deeper meaning just by the rhetoric use of words. I loved this when I read it. It said this, Age-old mountains shook, crumbled and collapsed, but God stands and marches on forever and rides into victory.

One look can cause the nations to tremble. One look from God can cause the nations to tremble. We know by reading this that anything stands against God and his people won't win.

[12 : 51] Isn't that true? In the midst of what appears to be chaos and disorder, know this. In the midst of what appears to be injustice, know this.

God will ultimately provide mercy and he will have ultimate victory. And his wrath is awesome and sometimes unexpected and inexplicable.

And so we can understand why Habakkuk said, what are you doing, God? Are you cross against the rivers, the streams, the sea, the land, the Cushites, the Midianites, the Israelites? Nothing seemed to escape God's wrath.

Not land, nor sea, nor man, nor nation. But God's wrath isn't random and we need to know that. We sometimes don't understand it and we choose to ignore it when we're on the wrong side and we're sinning.

And it's only when God's wrath is seen that we turn around and say, sorry, we need to get there before that because God is just and his justice will prevail.

[13 : 58] And in this instance, God was, his wrath was against his own nation. The injustice that he saw was happening there was not good and he was going to sort that out.

I love that Habakkuk was told to look out for and watch him and be utterly amazed because God was going to do something in his days that he wouldn't believe even if he were told.

God was going to take this monotheistic nation and move it into a polytheistic nation to make them realize that they needed one God. So monotheistic is one God, polytheistic is loads of gods.

And he was going to show them that by taking them into a land where there were so many of them and say, look here, you're missing me. You need me. And sometimes the most, when we have the most important thing taken away from us, we realize that it's the most important thing.

Rick Warren said, you don't realize God is all you need until God is all you got. Sometimes you don't realize that God is all you need until you haven't got him. Isn't that true? Or you feel like you haven't got him because he's always there.

[15 : 07] God's wrath wasn't against, it wasn't against just anyone. He was against the people that went against his nation as well. It says in verse 12, in wrath you stood, strode through the earth and in anger you threshed the nations.

You came out to deliver your people to save your anointed one. You crushed the leader of the land of wickedness and you stripped him from head to foot. The Babylonians would get their comeuppance.

Ultimately, no one gets away from God's judgment or punishment. So remember when you're going through times of trouble and you're going through times where you don't see God's justice on earth or even in your lifetime.

He is just and his justice will prevail. God's wrath had a specific purpose and that was beyond to punish Israel for their sin and beyond Babylon.

It was looking to the ultimate punishment of Satan and the victory of Christ. Now isn't that good news? God would do what Habakkuk prayed for. He was in his wrath going to remember his mercy because his justice was to save his anointed one and therefore his chosen people.

[16 : 24] That's you and I folks. we're his chosen people. We're his children. He did this for us as well. Habakkuk had no clue about the bigger picture and we don't, do we?

When we look at the world and we see what's happening we don't know about the bigger picture. Sometimes we see things that are unjust and we think, why? Why God aren't you answering this? Why God aren't you crushing this?

But we don't know the bigger picture. What we do know is God is just and his justice will prevail. Habakkuk didn't know the bigger picture and quite frankly if he did he wouldn't believe it because God's sole purpose was to provide Jesus as a saviour to the world and ultimately depose Satan from his self-appointed seat of power.

God's purpose was to steer his chosen people back from their self-appointed power that they had created and that in turn led to the injustice that was happening and bring them back from the abyss that they were heading for.

Now I'm going to give you a bit of an analogy here through a kayak and a boat. So I think we're going to have a little picture of me paddling a kayak. You won't see Mike because he's in the back. There won't be any sound to it I hope but I want to use this as an analogy.

[17 : 46] If you press play it should start. But anyway so if you're in a kayak the person at the front is the power. That's the one that gets the kayak moving.

The person in the back adds a bit of power but they use the oar to steer and guide it. And because a kayak is small it's very easy to steer and guide.

Especially if Mike's in the back because he's stronger than me no matter how hard I paddle or where I paddle he gets me to where he wants me to go. But a ship is a very different thing.

It's got a small rudder at the back and it's got to move a great big amount of boat and it takes a wee while longer for that boat to move around from that small rudder.

Now sometimes we're a bit like a big boat. We don't want to move as quickly as we should and God is turning that rudder but we're turning even slower. We need to be a kayak.

[18 : 42] Listen to God turning us and move quicker. That way we get out of trouble faster. Israel didn't listen. They were in a boat they decided the guy at the front decided I'm steering this ship I'm going to make call the shots and they landed up in trouble.

Lesson to us all be in a kayak not a ship. But sometimes it's really hard isn't it to change course. Sometimes when God digs his oar in we go in circles because we will paddle all our might until we get where we want and God's saying you're not.

You can go around in circles and eventually when you listen to me I will release you to the direction I want you to be in. So let's not go in circles. Let's go to the place where we are so thoroughly sick and tired of being in a bad place and thirst and hunger for more of God.

Want more of God in those times of wrath. Habakkuk showed a fear of turning around to God's direction. He was praying on behalf of Israel and he said from verse 16 I heard and my heart pounded next verse please my lips quivered at the sound decay crept into my bones I can imagine his fear as he said my legs trembled yet he said I will wait patiently for the day of calamity to come on the nation invading us 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 you see Habakkuk was scared of God's wrath and so we should be so he should be he was afraid of God's anger he gathered it was going to hurt and it did and yet he wanted more of God because he was far more sick and tired of the injustice than he was fearful of the wrath and he described this as a time when there was going to be a famine of God's provision no figs no grapes no olives no wheat no cattle no sheep never going to be in a pickle but you know all of that didn't matter one jot a nation that had known

God's mercy and his provision and his grace was going to be sent to exile again it wasn't the first time that they were sent to the naughty step this was the second big one and then if you come to Egypt it would have been three the other one was with the Assyrians but you see they were hoisted by their own pitard really they'd chosen to dabble in other gods it was their sin that got them there and now they were going to feel what it was going to be like without the one true God their exile was essential because they weren't listening to God and they weren't going to listen to God otherwise God wouldn't have done it heading off in the wrong direction the only way that God was going to get through to them was to take things away and banish them from his presence he was going to take that rudder and turn the ship back on its course it was a big nation and they needed to listen and God's wrath meant that the Israelites became powerless just when they thought they had all the power oh woe be Titus if we think we're powerful because we're not not one of us in this room is powerful it is by God's grace and God's power that we're able to do anything at all and it has to be for his glory doesn't it not ours but even in this appending doom

[22 : 28] Habakkuk accepts God's judgment and wrath in fact he says in verse 18 yet I will rejoice in the Lord I will be joyful in God my Saviour the sovereign Lord is my strength he makes my feet like the feet of a deer he enables me to tread on the heights now I don't tread on heights very easily don't do heights that's why I'm five foot nothing that God allows us to tread on heights that are far bigger and better than we could ever imagine if we listen to him if we rejoice in him but I wonder if we would feel in the same way if God took everything from us if we were banished from his presence at CMA the rally that we've just been to there was one part of it it was all amazing we had some fantastic teaching and worship and just really great time sharing the Lord 150 of us together like this church but one of the meetings one of the prayer meetings was quite poignant to me because a guy called Bob started off a prayer and said what would be the worst thing that could happen to you my first thought

I'd like you to think of what your first thought is and hold that in your heart but my first thought was to be without God I couldn't bear it I don't know how people live without him or yeah I just don't get it but you know what he said he said to have your son taken away from you and it's because his son had died and my heart went out to him it really did I thought oh my goodness yes how dreadful to have your child die before you that's not the natural order of things is it and then I thought about this and realised that both were true for God when Jesus Christ God's only son was crucified on the cross for the sin and the injustice that we see in this world and in our own actions today as Jesus went down to the depths of hell to deal with all the disgusting horribleness of the world past, present and future he was separated from his father in God's wrath his mercy was to remove sin from us the perpetrators of this sin and place it upon his only son and in the consequences he had to be separated from him for the first time he had to be separated from a part of himself now that that isn't mercy and grace in the midst of wrath

I don't know what is and it was poured out for us on our saviour there is a saying don't take your eye off the ball I'm going to say don't take your eye off the heavenlies we have this thing in our prayer group we look at the heavenlies when we pray we pray in the heavenly realm because that's where the battle is so when you are going through what seems like God's wrath remember his mercy has already been given through the death of his son Jesus Christ we will all ultimately leave this earth and if we know Jesus is our saviour we will go to heaven because of his mercy in the midst of his wrath against sin you know Habakkuk's prayer may have been the dithyrambic that's disjointed and loud and odd in tune and probably hard to understand in reading but the ultimate message is clear

God in his wrath has always shown his mercy and he always will there was a Maria put a message on the WhatsApp group Habakkuk 2-3 there will come a time when your tears will fall not because of your troubles but because God has answered your prayers no matter what wrath you feel you're going through God is merciful Amen let's pray continue continue continue continue