

# Habakkuk | Habakkuk's Prayer

Fairview Missionary Church | Angola, IN

Scripture: Habakkuk 3

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So over the last few weeks, we have been in this small book in the Old Testament, one of the minor prophets that often we decide to skip over. It's only three chapters, this prophet Habakkuk. We don't know a lot about Habakkuk. We know that he lived around 600 BC right before the fall of the southern kingdom of Judah, which happened in 586 BC. And that's what this conversation is all about that Habakkuk is having with God.

This little book stands out from the other prophets because all of the other prophets in the Old Testament had a message that God delivered to them, and then that prophet was to deliver it to the Israelite people. Whereas in Habakkuk, we are just seeing a conversation that he is having with God that we're made privy to. Today, we're going to finish this book with Habakkuk's closing prayer.

In this prayer, Habakkuk is going to affirm that God is the Almighty and He will do what He pleases. In the midst of this very difficult season, again, the Babylonians are coming to conquer their nation and the Israelites are going to be spread out over the known world. Habakkuk will confirm that he is still going to praise God and he is going to put his trust in him.

So today, the question that we are going to ask ourselves, are we able to put our trust and our faith in God even when things aren't going our way? Can we do that? How would you respond when God doesn't answer your prayers the way that you would like Him to answer them? Let me give you a few examples because I know that we all struggle with this. Maybe you were praying for a physical healing and it didn't happen.

Maybe you're praying for peace, but the war rages on. Maybe you spend years praying for the lost. You have family members or friends and you are praying that they would come to know Jesus. And yet after years of praying, they are still just as far away from Jesus as when you started. Maybe you pray for financial relief, and yet when the next bill comes in the mail, today you don't know how you would pay for it.

Maybe you're praying for your marriage, that it would be restored, but your spouse continues to run in the opposite direction. What is our response to God when we don't get our way? Being a pastor, I often have conversations that find themselves in difficult seasons of life like this. And it's not uncommon that people are angry when they are in this situation. They become angry even with God.

And often in that conversation, I say to them, "I appreciate your honesty with God, and I'm sure that God can handle your anger. But I also want you to know that this can be a dangerous time for the enemy to get a foothold in your life. When we are angry with God because we are not getting what we want, that feeling continues to fester and that hurt turns to pain and pain and anger, and we just begin to kind of push God away.

And so the question we need to ask is, what is the appropriate response for a believer when God allows pain and discomfort in our lives? How are we supposed to respond? Many people that come to church for the first time or are learning about this whole faith thing, we ask the question, should we expect life to be easy and without pain when we make the decision to proclaim Jesus as our Lord? Those of us that have walked that path for a while, the answer is no, unfortunately.

It is not going to be easy and without pain. And I love the Book of Habakkuk for this reason. It gives us a beautiful picture of how you and I should handle things when they don't go our way. So if you haven't been here, let's just do a real quick recap of the book of Habakkuk. First, Habakkuk complains because of what he is seeing around him with his people, with his nation. They are disobeying God, but he believes that God is being unfair.

Second, God gives Habakkuk an answer on how he is going to handle their disobedience, that he is going to bring in the Babylonians. And so third, Habakkuk is dumbfounded by God's plan, and he believes there has to be a better option. Why would you use that evil nation in order to show us punishment they're worse than we are? Fourth, God must remind Habakkuk, "I've got this.

Trust me, I know what I'm doing." And so now we will conclude in chapter three, the final chapter, where Habakkuk prays to God and he praises him for being in charge and for being good, even in the midst of a difficult season. And so here is our main point before we even get to the text. The main point is this, "God, you have been faithful in the past, and I know you will be faithful again." God, you have been faithful in the past, and I know you will be faithful again.

So if you haven't already, open your Bibles to Habakkuk, chapter 3, verse 1. Again, it's very short. It's near the end of the Old Testament. And if you can't find it, that's fine. The words will be on the screen behind me so that you can follow along. So let's pray before we read. Heavenly Father, we come to you. And with all the people in this room and those that are watching online, there are certainly people that find themselves in a season where they have been praying diligently, intently for something, and you have not answered in the way that they desire.

And so maybe they come today hurt with pain, maybe even struggling to trust you and to have faith in you. I pray that as we read the text this morning, that we would be reassured of your goodness that you are in control. So we ask this in Jesus' name, amen. Habakkuk chapter 3, starting in verse 1.

My slides are frozen again. There we go. A prayer of Habakkuk the Prophet on Shigayanoth. Now, you need to know that's kind of a strange word. Nobody really knows how to translate it, but it has something to do with music because this is going to be a song. It's going to be a prayer in song form. And so we get to verse two, "Lord, I have heard of your fame. I stand in all of your deeds, Lord. Repeat them in our day.

In our time, make them known. And in wrath, remember mercy. The first thing that you will notice if you've been here the last two weeks is that this prayer is in song form and it takes on a different tone than what Habakkuk had in chapters 1 and 2. After Habakkuk hears God's response in chapter two, he is reminded of how great our God is.

And sometimes you and I need to be reminded of how great our God is because as human beings, you and I struggle to take things for granted. We just get used to blessings. We get used to being given things. And so it becomes normal. We become entitled and we expect those things to happen. My wife has a sign hanging in our bedroom that says, "I still remember the days I prayed for the things I have now.

I still remember the days. I prayed for the things I have now." And as I was reading that sign, I don't think it's a coincidence. I was preparing for this message. And I was instantly reminded of how faithful God has been in my life. I remembered all of the things that I had prayed for that I now get to experience. I remember when I was a teenager and I was praying for my future spouse, not knowing who that was, and I am blessed with my spouse.

I remember the days that I was praying for children, and we were unsure if we would ever have children, and now I am blessed with three children. I'm blessed by my church family, by what I get to do here. I'm blessed by my health. I have a home to live in. I have friends. I could go on and on with all of the blessings

that God has poured out on my life. But just like me, you probably struggle in just taking those things for granted, and you want the next thing that you're praying for.

You and I often need to be reminded of how great God has been. And so Habakkuk is reminded of God's good deeds and everything he has done. And so his complaints will turn into a heartfelt prayer where he says, "Do those same things again, God." And here he's going to remember some of those things starting in verse 3. "God came from Taman, the Holy One from Mount Puran. His glory covered the heavens and his praise filled the earth.

His splendor was like the sunrise. Rays flashed from his hand where his power was hidden. Plague went before him. Pestilence followed his steps. He stood and he shook the earth. He looked and he 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.

Habakkuk is being reminded of what God has done in the past and who he is. He is being reminded that if God has brought you this far, he won't fail you now. We sang that song earlier. One of the best things that you and I can do when life seems out of control, when prayers aren't being answered, the way that we want them to be answered is to look back in the past and witness how God has brought you through it all.

Habakkuk goes back to the stories that he was told as a kid. We'll see in the next few verses of what God did in the past for the Israelite people and how He was faithful to them. Repeatedly, if you go through the Old Testament, you see that God would ask the Israelite people to set up pillars or monuments as a reminder of what he had done so that they would not forget.

He would tell them to celebrate certain days as special days or feasts as a way to remember so that when their children grew older and they didn't see the things with their eyes that the parents experienced, when they would see that monument or they would see that pillar, that they would say, "What is that there for? What does that represent? Why does that exist?" And then the parents could pass on to their children. This is why that pillar is there.

And so here are some that you may remember, the 12 stones that are set alongside the Jordan River. Those 12 stones were meant to be a monument, a pillar, to remind the Israelites when God caused the Jordan River to stop flowing so that the Israelites could walk through on dry land when Joshua would lead them into the Promised Land. Each one of the leaders of each tribes took a stone from the river and put it along the side so that when the children asked, "What is that structure there?

What's that for?" They would be reminded of God's faithfulness. Or the Israelites when they had the Ark of the Covenant and God told them to take two jars of mana, that bread-like substance that they had in the wilderness that God provided while they were wandering and put that in the jar and put those jars in the Ark of the Covenant so that they would be reminded that God provided for them. He is Jehovah Jira, our provider. Some of the feasts that the Israelites were to have every year, the Passover meal.

As they would celebrate the Passover, they would be reminded how God led the Israelites out of Egyptian bondage. Even the details of the design of the temple that they were to build all over in the design and the details were images that would remind them of the garden of Eden when man walked with God without sin. And so I asked the question of us today, what pillars or monuments have you set up in your life to be reminded of all that God has done for you?

Have you set up pillars? Are there things that you do on certain days of the year because you want to remind yourself and your family, your children, your grandchildren of God's faithfulness. Let me just give you some examples. Some of you may do it without even knowing it. Maybe you have pictures up in your house of family members or friends, people that God has brought into your life that played a huge role in your faith journey. And so as you look at those pictures, you are reminded of God's faithfulness in your life.

Many of us wear a ring around our finger that represents the covenant that we made before God to be faithful to our spouse 10, 20, 30, 40, 50 plus years ago. We wear this as a reminder of the covenant that we have with our spouse and before God. Maybe you have a souvenir or a knickknack or something that you have in your house that you brought back with you from a mission trip that you went on that was a defining moment in your life.

God used that trip to transform you. Maybe you have a framed diploma in your office that reminds you with God's help, you are able to accomplish your goals. Remember all the times that you prayed for God to help you on the next test that was coming up or the paper that you had to write? That diploma can be a reminder of God's faithfulness.

Maybe you keep a hospital bracelet in a drawer, or maybe you have a literal scar on your body that you can look at, and it reminds you of God's healing in your life after a hard surgery or something you had to go through, those times that you look back and say, "God, I prayed for healing, and you have brought healing." Maybe it's a burned mortgage for your house that reminds you of God's faithfulness and His goodness to you.

Maybe it's a cross that you have up on the wall in your house to remember God's sacrifice that made a way for you to have a relationship with a holy and righteous God. Maybe it's a holiday that you have set aside on your calendar. You have a star on a date that most other people wouldn't have a star on because that is a date that you want to remember because God has blessed you in some way on that day. In my family, we have one of those days, and we call it our God gave us you day.

And it's a day that we celebrate the adoption of I have a sneeze coming. And now it's not going to come. All right. Maybe in five minutes, I'll do it again. It's our God gave us you day. We celebrate our oldest son, Micah. That's when we were able to officially adopt him. Now we were with him since day one, but you go to the court and you know officially all the papers get signed. And so December 6th is our God gave us U-Day. And for whatever reason, there's no correlation, but we go out and have Mexican food.

That's what we do on our God gave us you day. It's probably because we let Micah choose, and that's what he always chooses. He wants Mexican food. But maybe you have days on your calendar that are set aside because you want to remember God's faithfulness. Of course, I could go on, but the point is, in our moments of doubt, in our moments of uncertainty, one of the best things you and I can do is look back and remember that God hasn't brought us this far to leave us now. Let's go on in verse 8.

Were you angry with the rivers, Lord? Was your wrath against the streams? Did you rage against the sea when you rode your horses and your chariots to victory? For you uncovered your bow. You called for many arrows. You split the earth with rivers. The mountains saw you and writhed. Torrents of water swept by the deep roared and lifted its waves on high. Habakkuk is remembering the stories of the flood.

He's remembering the stories of God's power. And he comes to the conclusion, "Why am I concerned about a nation that is rising up against us or anything that is going on in my life when I serve a God who can split the earth with rivers and make mountains writhe?" He comes to the conclusion that you and I should come to that God is more powerful than anything I could fear. There is nothing that is outside of God's control.

When in doubt, when you have fear, there is only one person to run to. God, the king of the universe. Habakkuk goes on in verse 11, "Sun and Moon stood still in the heavens, at the glint of your flying arrows, at the lightning of your flashing spear. In wrath, you strode through the earth, and in anger you thrashed the nations. You came out to deliver your people, to save your anointed one. You crushed the leader of the land of wickedness.

You stripped him from head to foot. With his own spear, you pierced his head when his warriors stormed out to scatter us, gloating as though about to devour the wretched who were in hiding. You trampled the

sea with your horses churning the great waters. Again, Habakkuk going back to the time of the Israelites being led out of Egyptian bondage, and Egypt was the strongest world power at that time. And here were the Israelites who were not even a nation and God freed them.

He remembers the stories of David and Goliath. He remembers that he serves a God that makes the sun and the moon stand still. He has conquered foreign nations that were stronger than they were. Habakkuk is making this list, and it wouldn't be a bad idea for you to make a list to remember all the amazing things that God has done for you. Maybe not even just your own list of what God has done for you, but even in the lives of what He has done for others.

Just last Sunday night, we had a time of testimony and worship. And there were five testimonies that were shared of God's blessing, physical healing in people's lives, as well as spiritual healing when God is able to pull us out of the pit that we all find ourselves in. And He promises to love us. Make a list of God's faithfulness. This is one of the reasons that I so strongly push for a video testimony for people to be baptized because I believe that God uses that testimony of those that are being baptized to influence others to help their faith grow.

Habakkuk is reminded in these verses that God does punish evil, that even if God is going to use the Babylonians to bring judgment on the Israelites, if the Babylonians don't repent, they will also be judged. So we come to verse 16. "I heard and my heart pounded. My lips quivered at the sound. Decay crept into my bones and my legs trembled.

Yet, Habakkuk says, "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, yet I will rejoice in the Lord. I will be joyful in God my Savior. You want to talk about an amazing transformation.

If you go back to Habakkuk chapter 1 verse 1, Habakkuk goes from complaining and arguing with God to saying, "Although there are no figs, there's no grapes, there's no olives or sheep, yet I will rejoice in the Lord." Are you able to rejoice in the Lord when everything around you is falling apart and it seems like the world is going to crumble? Are you willing to trust Him, even if it means not knowing where your next meal is going to come from?

That is the faith that God desires. Let's wrap this up with verse 19. Habakkuk ends his book by saying, "The sovereign Lord is my strength. He makes my feet like the feet of a deer. He enables me to tread on the heights. The Lord is my strength." In just three short chapters, we went from, "How long, O Lord, to the sovereign Lord is my strength." Isn't it beautiful?

My prayer is that every single one of us will be able to go from complaint and doubt and fear into a spirit of thanksgiving. As we head into Thanksgiving this week, can I encourage you to be the positive one in your family gathering? I know many of us are going to be gathering with friends and family and having a meal together.

And it would be easy as we are spending time with our family and friends to talk about all of the crazy that's going on in our world right now, all of the wars that are taking place in the Middle East and Ukraine and Russia. There's a lot of suffering and hurt and pain and sorrow. There's a lot of decisions that are being made right now, ethical, moral decisions in our country that many of us would disagree with. There's politics. That's a taboo topic for family, but some still try to discuss.

It would be easy to complain around the table this year, but can I encourage you to be the one that stands up and says, "But God is good." God is good. He has been faithful. He is in control. Would you be the one to reassure those around the table? He hasn't brought us this far just to fail us now. He is still on his throne.

Do your best to tamper down the, "How long, O Lords," and replace them with the sovereign Lord is my strengths. Get rid of the, "How long, O Lord, and increase the sovereign Lord is my strength." Now, if your families like my family, there may be people who don't understand. They're going to think you're crazy. But what a great opportunity to have a conversation about your faith. Spend some time remembering God's faithfulness in your life, and you know one practical thing you could do.

Maybe you could even bring one of your memorials as a reminder. Maybe you bring a picture or you bring something and you say, "You know what? I wanted to bring this today because here we're at Thanksgiving, and I want to thank God for this." Maybe it's a picture of your family. I remember when I prayed for these things, and here we are, you say, "God, thank you for your faithfulness. Thank you that you promise you have not brought us this far just to leave us now." I'm going to close in prayer, and then the worship team is going to come up and close us in a song, and we have some testimonies, and then we will have our three baptisms.

Again, you might see the kids come in, all right? Heavenly Father, we come before You today, thanking You for Your goodness. Thanking You for Your faithfulness. Again, with all of the people in this room and those that are watching online, there are many that are probably going through a difficult season and they're saying, "How long, O Lord?" May you encourage them today. May they come to the conclusion, "The Lord is my strength.

I will trust in Him." We ask this in Jesus' name, amen.