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May 8, 2022

From Fear To Faith
Habakkuk 3:1-15

Please take your Bible and open to Habakkuk 3. Thank you for being here this morning. We have been moving into our home and we got some help this last week and over the weekend from my wife's family. Brianna's parents Frank and Karolyn Cooper are visiting this morning from San Diego and Brianna's sister Jenni and her husband Jessie and their kids are here visiting from Huntington, West Virginia. I'm very thankful for the fact that I married way out of my league and I'm thankful for my extended family..and I guess the pressure is on with this lesson.

As you are turning to Habakkuk 3, one of the things I encouraged you to do along with our study of Habakkuk is to pick up and read through a book by Jerry Bridges called Trusting God. If you read Bridges book Trusting God and study of Habakkuk I think it will help you trust God more. We all need to trust God more, right? Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord and whose trust is the Lord - Jeremiah 17:7.

We really only have two options in life - we trust in ourselves or we trust in the Lord. Those are the only two paths in life. One is filled with joy and blessing and the other is filled with heartache and pain. Habakkuk shows us what it means are a real man living life in a real fallen world to trust in the only real God. If Habakkuk did it, by God's grace, we can do it.

This is what we are seeing Habakkuk doing in this short 3 chapter book. Habakkuk had some major concerns about the spiritual condition of the nation around him. The nation was spiraling out of control spiritually and Habakkuk took his concerns to the Lord. Remember how the Lord chose to answer Habakkuk's complaints - Not by sending revival but by sending a wicked nation called the Chaldeans or the Babylonians. Habakkuk kept complaining and it looked like God wasn't working. God is never not working. God was already working behind the scenes to raise up a nation even more wicked than Judah to come in and punish God's people on account of their willful continual rebellion.

Habakkuk knew that the Lord would punish Judah for their sins and in Habakkuk 2 the Lord makes it clear that He is then going to punish the people who punish His people. Are you still with me? All of this should lead us to ask, "With all this judgment for wickedness, is there any hope?" Yes. God is the God of hope. There are two verses in Habakkuk 2 that provide hope for Habakkuk and those people in the nation, that small remnant, that does trust in the Lord.

Habakkuk 2:4

Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright within him, but the righteous shall live by his faith.

Habakkuk 2:14

For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

The ESV Study Bible says, "God's ways of preserving and purifying his people are mysterious to the believer; and yet God calls his suffering people to show faith that God's purposes for the world will at last prevail."

Habakkuk is a reminder that everyone who is proud and seeks their own glory will inevitably be silenced. God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. People who trust the Lord will one day behold His glory in a new heavens and a new earth where there will be no more sin and no more judgment for sin. Our focus always needs to be on God's glory and how He glorifies Himself.

Richard Patterson, "The glory of the Lord that filled the Tabernacle at its inauguration (Ex. 40:34, 35) and the Temple at its dedication (1 Kings 8:10–12), that attended the announcement of Christ's birth (Luke 2:9–14) and is reflected in the lives of believers who have been taken into union with Christ (2 Cor. 3:18) will one day be known and experienced by all (Isa. 59:19) who confess "that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:11)."

In humble response to what Habakkuk knows to be true he turns in prayer and in praise to God.

Let's read Habakkuk 3

A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet, according to Shigionoth.

2 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.

3 God came from Teman,
and the Holy One from Mount Paran. Selah
His splendor covered the heavens,
and the earth was full of his praise.

4 His brightness was like the light;
rays flashed from his hand;
and there he veiled his power.

5 Before him went pestilence,
and plague followed at his heels.

6 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.

7 I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction;
the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble.

8 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,
on your chariot of salvation?

9 You stripped the sheath from your bow,
calling for many arrows. Selah
You split the earth with rivers.

10 The mountains saw you and writhed;
the raging waters swept on;
the deep gave forth its voice;
it lifted its hands on high.

11 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.

12 You marched through the earth in fury;
you threshed the nations in anger.

13 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. Selah

14 You pierced with his own arrows the heads of his warriors,
who came like a whirlwind to scatter me,
rejoicing as if to devour the poor in secret.

15 You trampled the sea with your horses,
the surging of mighty waters.

16 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.

17 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 stalls,

18 yet I will rejoice in the Lord;
I will take joy in the God of my salvation.

19 God, the Lord, is my strength;
he makes my feet like the deer's;
he makes me tread on my high places.

This past week I received a sobering text from a friend back in Kansas. He's a man who genuinely loves the Lord and his family and who serves faithfully in the church. He was having some health problems and he went in for some tests. The doctors discovered a large brain tumor. A malignant brain cancer called glioblastoma. It's considered to be the most deadly form of cancer.

I spoke with Scott on the phone Friday and he was very emotional. He was crying a lot on the phone. He knows that his life on earth will never be the same. He was in a hospital room in Kansas City surrounded by family members. It was tough for me to listen to someone I love and I know loves the Lord struggle emotionally with this news that he has a very aggressive form of cancer.

Let me ask you - Is it okay for people who know the Lord to be emotional when they hear life altering news or are we just supposed to grin and bear it? Are we allowed to get emotional as Christ followers? I think so. It's normal to have feelings of fear when you get life altering news.

One thing we see in the prophet Habakkuk in this chapter is honesty. Honesty about how he feels now that He understands God's plan. You see him using the word fear in verse 1. Verse 16, "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." Habakkuk has genuine fear over what he knows is coming.

Habakkuk shows us that it is possible to be emotional and relying on the Lord at the same time. Martyn Lloyd Jones, "God's greatest men of faith often quailed physically at certain prospects which confronted them. To

see the truth and understand the doctrines is most important, but despite this clear understanding we may still tremble physically. To do so under certain terrible conditions does not necessarily mean that you have no faith, though the devil will try and persuade you. If ever you are so tempted, remember Habakkuk! Habakkuk understood perfectly, yet he trembled like a leaf through the sheer weakness of his flesh."

Habakkuk also shows us that we do not have to be controlled by our emotions. We do not have to be controlled by human emotions such as fear or worry or anxiety. We do not have to allow these things to keep us from knowing the Lord or serving the Lord.

God knows how weak we are. That is why He tells us in 1 Peter 5:6-7, "Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you." God's hand is a mighty hand. He always delivers His people. How do we humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God? By continually casting all of our anxieties on Him. His power is real and He cares for us so take whatever weighs you down and throw it on the Lord.

Habakkuk shows us you can be fearful and worshipful at the same time. Habakkuk should be a great encouragement to all of us because he shows us that it is possible to encounter very challenging circumstances in life and still maintain joy in the Lord. This morning we will look at Habakkuk 3:1-15 under two headings:

Let's begin by looking at:

1. Habakkuk's Honesty and Plea for God's Mercy - Habakkuk 3:1-2

Habakkuk 3:1-2, “A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet, according to Shigionoth. LORD, I have heard the report of You and I fear. O LORD, revive your work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make it known; in wrath remember mercy.”

This is really a prayer of praise. Shigionoth has the idea of setting something to music. Habakkuk’s focus is once again in the right place. You’ll notice both references to LORD in verse 2 are in all capital letters. When you see LORD in all capital letters that is the english translation of YHWH. That is the covenant name for Israel’s God. No other nation had it. It means eternal existence, eternal presence. Habakkuk knew the Lord’s promises and His power and He stood in awe. His past faithfulness to His people serves as the basis of Habakkuk’s request for mercy. He knows God is going to judge Judah through the Chaldeans and as one commentator named Richard Patterson writes, “With aching heart he urges God to be compassionate in the coming turmoil.”

Lord, please in your wrath remember mercy. With an aching heart he urges God to be compassionate in the coming turmoil. Wrath is a very expressive word. Wrath is an action that produces a fearsome trembling, such as before a fierce storm. Mercy describes a warm love of great depth. Habakkuk’s prayer of praise includes a concern that in the midst of judgment God will remember to have tender compassion on His people. Of the entire chapter, only this verse takes on the form of a petition for God to do something.

I believe this is a sign of spiritual maturity in Habakkuk’s life. The more revelation the Lord gave Habakkuk the more tender he became. Habakkuk aged well in his walk with God. He does what Paul tells us to do in

Romans 5:3-5, "Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us."

What is our approach to tribulations? We exult in them. We don't exult in the tribulation itself but in the Lord who is in control of our tribulations. Trials are not accidents. Hardships are not practical jokes. We exult in tribulations because we know God is working on our character in the midst of trials and we have hope because His love has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

Horatius Bonar once wrote, "Man's dislike of God's sovereignty arises from his suspicion of God's heart." When difficulties come we should not be suspicious of the heart of God. Why? Because His love is perfect for His people. Charles Spurgeon, "God is too good to be unkind. He is too wise to be confused. If I cannot trace His hand, I can always trust His heart."

Look back with me at Habakkuk 3. Habakkuk knows God's heart - he is not suspicious. He knows God disciplines the son he loves and he pleads for mercy in the midst of wrath. This is Habakkuk's last petition to God. What we find in the rest of this chapter is praise to God. Habakkuk begins his response to God with a plea for pity and in verses 3-15 he responds to God with praise for His power:

2. Habakkuk's Memory and Praise for God's Power - Habakkuk 3:3-15

What Habakkuk does in Habakkuk 3:3-15 is so instructive for us. Instead of focusing on himself he uses his mind to go back and think about what he

knows to be true about God. He reflects on God's intervention in the lives of His people. He traces the mighty acts of God.

3 God came from Teman,
and the Holy One from Mount Paran. Selah

4 His radiance is like the sunlight;
He has rays flashing from His hand,
And there is the hiding of His power.

5 Before Him goes pestilence,
And plague comes after Him.

6 He stood and surveyed the earth;
He looked and startled the nations.
Yes, the perpetual mountains were shattered,
The ancient hills collapsed.
His ways are everlasting.

7 I saw the tents of Cushan under distress,
The tent curtains of the land of Midian were trembling.

8 Did the Lord rage against the rivers,
Or was Your anger against the rivers,
Or was Your wrath against the sea,
That You rode on Your horses,
On Your chariots of salvation?

9 Your bow was made bare,
The rods of chastisement were sworn.

Selah.

You cleaved the earth with rivers.

10 The mountains saw You and quaked;
The downpour of waters swept by.
The deep uttered forth its voice,
It lifted high its hands.

11 Sun and moon stood in their places;
They went away at the light of Your arrows,
At the radiance of Your gleaming spear.
12 In indignation You marched through the earth;
In anger You trampled the nations.
13 You went forth for the salvation of Your people,
For the salvation of Your anointed.
You struck the head of the house of the evil
To lay him open from thigh to neck.

Selah.

14 You pierced with his own spears
The head of his throngs.
They stormed in to scatter us;
Their exultation was like those
Who devour the oppressed in secret.
15 You trampled on the sea with Your horses,
On the surge of many waters.

Habakkuk knows something. God acts on behalf of His people in mighty ways. When we think of the majesty of God we are thinking about His glory on display. Majesty is God's glory expressed in this world in tangible ways. Habakkuk wrote his letter around 610 B.C. A conservative date for creation is 4000 B.C. What does that mean? Habakkuk had thousands of years of God's work to reflect on beginning all the way back with creation.

God has been faithful to His people in the past and he is confident God will be faithful to His people in the present and in the future. In verses 3-7 Habakkuk remembers the Exodus. Israel's movement up from the Sinai peninsula through the Transjordanian countries on the way to the Jordan River crossing.

Israel had experienced God's power and so had the nations. The LORD is sovereign over creation and history. God is seen in all His majesty as the One whose splendor permeates and transcends the heavens. His praise is said to fill the earth. Patterson writes, "When one considers Him whose majestic splendor fills heaven and earth, he can but stand in awe of Him and sing His praises."

It is so important that we take time to do what Habakkuk is doing here. It is so important that we take time, not just to read the Word of God, but to give ourselves enough time to respond in meditation, prayer and praise. John 4 reminds us that God the Father is seeking worshippers who worship Him in spirit and in truth. Jesus told the woman at the well who was confused over worship, "But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." That time is today.

Let me ask you a question - When you read Scripture and you see people praising God do they ever seem bored to you? Does worship seem boring in the Bible? Habakkuk doesn't appear bored to me. He doesn't seem to need coffee to stay awake in his quiet time. The more he meditates on God's majesty the more excited he becomes.

If the idea of worship is boring to you or something you probably need to spend some time alone with the Lord and make sure you know Him personally. No one I read in Scripture who knows God personally is bored as they reflect on His power. But it does require time, effort and focus. But this is why we are saved. We are saved to worship God. He seeks worshippers who worship Him in spirit and truth. That was Habakkuk's

privilege and that is our privilege. His God is our God. He has just revealed Himself in our day more fully in Christ.

In Habakkuk 3:8-15, the prophet moves from praising God for His conquest, His victory on behalf of His people. I want you just to notice the word You. You see the word you twice in verse 9, twice in verse 12, twice in verse 13, and you see it in verse 14 and 15. What do we do when we know God's plan for our lives includes pain? We focus on who God is. We try not to focus more on ourselves but less on ourselves and more on the Lord.

The second poem in this section is a victory song of the mighty strength of Israel's Redeemer. "From start to finish, Israel's God is shown to be the victor over all individuals and nations and the champion of those who follow in His train." Yahweh is portrayed metaphorically as Israel's mighty warrior who appears in His battle chariot in v. 8), He is armed with bow and club in verse 9, arrows and spear in verse 11. He is shown to be the true Master over the forces of nature.

Israel understood that it was not their power that subdued other nations. The LORD God is sovereign over all forces and events. These verses are describing the early part of the Exodus and passing through the Jordan. Habakkuk is praising God for His power revealed in Exodus and Joshua. His power is seen at the waters, in the natural world, and His power is seen by His enemies.

Guys, we know this. Our Lord is powerful. His power is unmatched. He has no equals. He is omnipotent. He wins every battle. He never loses. No matter who or what is against the Lord, they will not prevail. Habakkuk knew the Babylonians were powerful but no nation can stand up to the

power of King Yahweh. Habakkuk had to trust God's power in dealing with a powerful nation.

We can all look back on history and see how God fulfilled His promises to His people. God did raise up the Babylonians. They did come in starting in 605 BC and wiped out Judah and destroyed the temple in Jerusalem and carried off captives for 70 years. In due time the Lord did destroy the nation that punished His people.

The Persians defeated the Babylonians and under the Persian King there was a remnant of God's people that was sent back to Judah, back to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple. The city was established and the temple was rebuilt. Then, fast forward a few hundred years and we read what happened in Galatians 4:4-7, "But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God."

Through the Lord Jesus Christ God's power was supremely put on display. Christ came in the fulness of time, truly God and truly Man, to reverse the curse of sin. He lived under the Law to keep the Law to go to the cross to redeem those who broke the Law. Through the work of Christ justice is upheld and the law is satisfied.

God has provided the ultimate deliverance for His people. He has put His power on display in defeating sin. We are all sinners. We've all broken God's law. Sin is our master by nature and by birth and we do not have the power to free ourselves from the power of sin. That's why God sent Christ.

God sent Christ to do what we cannot do. Jesus obeyed where we disobeyed and He went to the cross to redeem us from our sins. To buy us back. To purchase our redemption that we would be children of God and heirs with Christ.

What does this mean? Our greatest problem today is not the Babylonians. They're long gone. They're history. Our greatest problem is that we are sinful people. No one makes a 100 in here. We've all broken God's Law. We've all sinned and fall short of God's glory. There is no hope in us. Our hope is Christ crucified. Our hope is Christ resurrected and ruling. Our hope cannot ever be in ourselves, it must always be in Jesus.

Please turn to 1 John 2:1-2 and we will finish with this important reminder. Do any of you still sin since God saved you? Did any of you sin last week? Last night? This morning? We make it our goal not to sin but we still sin. We do not always do what God says the right way with the right heart. Here is what John reminds us in 1 John 2:1-2. Our Savior is also our Advocate.

Jesus, the One who died and rose again for us, is the One who fights for us. When we sin He is our advocate. 1 John 2:1, "My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." What's an advocate?

Advocate translates the word Helper. One called alongside to help. John MacArthur writes, "Perhaps a modern concept of the term would be a defense attorney. Although Satan prosecutes believers night and day before the Father due to sin (Rev. 12:10), Christ's High-Priestly ministry guarantees not only sympathy but also acquittal (Heb. 4:14-16)."

On that basis can Jesus plead our case when we sin against a holy God? 1 John 2:2, “He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.” Jesus defends us because His work on the cross completely satisfied the wrath of God against all of our sins. Jesus doesn’t defend us with something hypothetical, but something actual. His death is His defense.

How kind of Jesus Christ? He not only defeated our sin at the cross. He rose again and lives to make intercession for us. Jesus never stops defending us. Wow. I hope that causes us to love Jesus more. We love Jesus more when we take time to consider all that He has done for us, is doing for us and will do for us. That love for Jesus leads us to trust Him through the storms of life.

I close with the words to the song He will hold me fast:

When I fear my faith will fail, Christ will hold me fast
When the tempter would prevail, He will hold me fast
I could never keep my hold through life's fearful path
For my love is often cold; He must hold me fast

He will hold me fast, He will hold me fast
For my Savior loves me so, He will hold me fast

Those He saves are His delight, Christ will hold me fast
Precious in His holy sight, He will hold me fast
He'll not let my soul be lost; His promises shall last

Bought by Him at such a cost, He will hold me fast
He will hold me fast, He will hold me fast
For my Savior loves me so, He will hold me fast
For my life He bled and died, Christ will hold me fast

Justice has been satisfied; He will hold me fast
Raised with Him to endless life, He will hold me fast
'Til our faith is turned to sight, When He comes at last!
He will hold me fast, He will hold me fast
For my Savior loves me so, He will hold me fast
He will hold me fast, He will hold me fast
For my Savior loves me so
For my Savior loves me so
He will hold me fast