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God's Antidote for Anxiety
Habakkuk 3:16-19

Please take your Bible and open to the end of the prophet Habakkuk. Habakkuk 3:16-19 will be our focus this morning as we finish the book of Habakkuk. I just want to thank all of you for being a part of this study. When you are new to a church and you choose a book like Habakkuk to teach through you hope a few people show up for the study. Thanks for being here. The apostle John wrote in 3 John 4 about how his greatest joy in ministry came from seeing those he served walking in the truth. Your love for the Lord and His Word and your desire to apply it to your life is a great encouragement to me. The title for this lesson is God's Antidote for Anxiety.

After we moved here a few months ago my love for my daughters was tested. Before we moved here from Kansas both of my older daughters played on their middle school girls basketball team. They loved it. I loved it. I loved watching them play. When we got here they still wanted to watch the games from the team back in Kansas and so we would find the games on livestream and we would watch the games. Yes, I watched junior high girls basketball games that my daughters were not even playing in. The test of my love.

I think I am getting this story right. We were watching one game that was a really close game. Toward the end of the game the good players on the team started to get hurt. One by one they were getting hurt and coming off the court. At one point we saw the coach motion for one of Molly's friends to come from the end of the bench to sit next to him. We saw this girl talking to the coach but we didn't know what they were talking about. Then we saw the girl stand up and go back to her seat on the bench and sit down. She didn't go into the game.

After the game Molly texted her friend to ask what was going on and why she didn't go into the game. Her friend told her that the coach wanted to put her in but she told the coach, "I am not going into the game because I don't know what to do. I don't understand so I'm going back to the end of the bench." Because she didn't know what she was supposed to be doing she opted to not play.

What was true for that junior high girl is also true in the Christian life. Is it possible for us to glorify God if we don't know His plan? No. We have to know God's plan for this world to live for His glory. As you know the good news is that there is a plan for this world. The God who spoke the world into existence upholds the universe by the word of His power and He has a plan for this broken world and He works all things according to the counsel of His will. This is good news.

A pastor named Andy Davis says it this way, **"We are created in the image of God, and our God is a planning God. We believe from Ephesians 1 that he planned out, before the foundation of the world, to call a people for himself, for his own name and his own glory, that they should be holy and blameless in his sight. And it says, *"In love he predestined them and called them according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose or plan of his will."* Our God is a glorious planner. And thanks be to God, all of us who are Christians can say this, "Thanks be to God that his plan extended even to me, and that God worked in history and orchestrated things so that I would come to faith in Christ."**

Knowing God's plan and that we're included in God's plan is a motivator to keep living for the Lord when the going gets tough. Remember what Paul reminded Timothy in his last letter. Timothy was in a tough situation in life. He's ministering in a very difficult city and his mentor in the faith is about to die. How does Paul encourage Timothy? He tells him not to be ashamed to keep speaking up for Christ and then he rehearses the gospel with Timothy one more time.

2 Timothy 1:8-11

- 8 Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God,
9 who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began,
10 and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel,
11 for which I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher

Paul told Timothy to not be ashamed of the gospel and then he rehearsed the gospel he doesn't want Timothy to be ashamed of

It is incredibly comforting to know there is a plan for this world and we are included in it and that God's plans cannot fail. Whatever God plans God does. We also know what God is doing through all of the pain and suffering that life inevitably brings. Romans was written to Christians who were being killed for their faith. They were routinely arrested for worshipping Jesus Christ alone and not the emperor or the false gods in Rome. How does Paul encourage such people? He reminds them of God's plan.

Romans 8:28-30

- 28 And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.
29 For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.
30 And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

Paul encouraged suffering saints by taking them back to God's plan from eternity past when God set His love on them to eternity future when they will be glorified. Do you smell what I'm cooking up here? Over and over again we see that the antidote for anxiety or the prescription for pain or the fuel for addressing fear is making sure you know God's plan and you're

included in it by faith in Christ. That you are taking God at His Word and trusting His plan.

I know life is busy. I know there are many things we have to think about on a daily basis. We have to work and make a living. We have to parent our children and get them to school and practice and whatever else they are doing. We have a lot of things we have to do every day, but may we never forget to take time to sit still before the Lord and drink in His divine plan. Start with morning coffee and reviewing God's purpose for this world and make sure you are trusting Him and aligning your will with His Word.

What does this rather lengthy introduction have to do with Habakkuk? When Habakkuk wrote his letter he was still in the process of learning God's plan. Habakkuk didn't know God's plan for His people. Habakkuk lived about 600 years before the coming of Christ during a time of spiritual decline in Judah. Spiritual decline is a kind way of saying more people were living for sin than the Lord. Habakkuk takes his complaints to the Lord in the first chapter about the spiritual condition of His people and God answers Habakkuk in a way that would have been hard for his little Hebrew brain to fathom.

God is going to do what He said he would do if His people rebelled. All the way back in Deuteronomy 28 the Lord told His people that if they persisted in unrepentant sin he would cause them to be defeated by their enemies. Deuteronomy 28:25. That is what God tells Habakkuk. God is going to punish His people by raising up a notoriously wicked nation to come into the place where Habakkuk lives to judge His people for their continual habitual rebellion. God is patient with sinners but judgment inevitably comes on everyone who lives in sin and does not repent.

Habakkuk 1-2 is a dialogue between Habakkuk and the Lord where Habakkuk discovers God's plan. **Habakkuk 3 is Habakkuk's response to God's plan.** This is what we need to remember.

Habakkuk rejoices in the Lord even though God's plan differed from his plan.

When Habakkuk didn't get what he wanted he didn't deny the faith. He didn't take his scroll home and burn it. **He doubled down in his devotion to the Lord. In Habakkuk 3 we see a man who knows his life is going to be really hard devoting himself afresh and anew to rejoicing in God and how God worked in the past for His people and how God would work in the future for His people.**

Friends, that in and of itself is worth the price of admission. Habakkuk shows us that it is possible to not get what you want in life and maintain joy in the Lord.

Habakkuk shows us that it is possible to not get what you want from God and still rejoice in God

This morning we finish on a high note. Please take your Bible and join me in Habakkuk 3:16-19.

Habakkuk 3:16-19

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.
To the choirmaster: with stringed instruments.

In these final four verses we see Habakkuk's honesty and hope:

1. Honesty - Habakkuk 3:16
2. Hope - Habakkuk 3:17-19

Let's start with Habakkuk's honesty in verse 16. Back to Habakkuk 3:16, "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 shows us in this verse how he feels about God's plan. He is very graphic. Habakkuk is a man. He's a unique man in that he speaks for God but he's still 100% human. What he knows is going to happen affects him physically. God's plan for Habakkuk and the nation rocked this Hebrew man to the core of his being.

Jim Rosscup, "Habakkuk "heard" God's Word about dealing with coming judgment (cf. v. 2), and trembles (mentioned twice). This is drawing a true, respectful estimate of the Word, awed in taking it seriously (Isa. 66:2). Habakkuk was reduced to a sense of utter inadequacy as to his own prowess (cf. John 15:5; 2 Cor. 3:5). His inner being was rocked by fear, his lips quivered, and "rottenness entered into my bones." Nothing within himself was adequate. His frame seemed to dissolve; he had no power to stand up, for the message seized him in its powerful grip."

Wow. I think sometimes we think that people who wrote the Bible can't identify with things we all go through in life. Nothing could be further from the truth. The biblical writers are honest. They are honest about their own heart and their own feelings and their own fears. They express emotions. Why? To not express emotions would render them inhumane. God used real men to record His Word. 2 Peter 1:21, "Men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God."

Sam Williams, "God gives us emotions for a specific purpose. They are necessary for us to properly to know and relate and glorify God."

In Habakkuk 3:16 we see a man who is emotional...stay with me here... **without being controlled by his emotions.** We are human. We all have

emotions. We will be emotional. The challenge is to cultivate our emotions and not be controlled by our emotions.

How we handle our emotions will inevitably lead to spiritual maturity or spiritual decline.

You don't need to raise your hand but how many of you have allowed your emotions to keep you back from doing something you knew the Lord wanted you to do? Fear or worry or anxiety kept you at some point in your life from stepping out and being faithful to the Lord? Maybe that is why Paul reminded the Romans in Romans 1:16, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel." Maybe he wrote that because he knew the very real temptation we all face to be ashamed of the gospel. The inevitable shame that comes from telling people there is only one way of salvation through a unique man nailed to an old rugged cross.

What we see in Habakkuk 3:16 should really encourage us. Why?

Habakkuk was emotional but not controlled by his emotions.

Habakkuk shows us that it is possible to hear life altering news about God's plan and have an emotional response that actually leads to deeper worship. What does he trust in to cultivate his emotions in a way that glorifies God? Look at the end of verse 16, "Yet I will quietly wait for the day of trouble to come upon people who invade us."

Habakkuk commits to wait for two things to happen - The people to invade the place where he lives and God to punish the people who do the invading. Habakkuk knows that God has a plan and He will do it. He commits again to wait on God. Waiting on God is not being passive - It is actively trusting that God is always working. The God of Israel neither slumbereth or sleepeth.

This is what brings Habakkuk comfort. He knows God's plan. Go back and read up to this point in the book. Habakkuk didn't start the book knowing God's plan. He starts complaining. But the more he waits on the Lord and the more the Lord reveals His plan to Habakkuk, even though it wasn't what Habakkuk wanted God to do, he still worships God. He is comforted by the fact that God will judge His people in a different way than He will

judge the Babylonians. His people will survive. A remnant will remain. Not so with the Babylonians. They'll be completely destroyed.

Turn over with me to 2 Thessalonians 1:5. As you are turning there I remember a pastor telling me one time never to read a cross reference without supplying the context. Why the verses were written. 2

Thessalonians was written to believers in Christ who were suffering. Major persecution and affliction. They were enduring much tribulation at the hands of unbelievers who tried to make their lives miserable for following Christ. Notice how Paul comforts them in 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10. Paul comforts them by reminding them that whoever is persecuting them will be punished by God.

2 Thessalonians 1:5-10

- 5 This (The believers persecution and affliction) is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are also suffering—
- 6 since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you,
- 7 and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels
- 8 in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.
- 9 They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might,
- 10 when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed.

How does Paul comfort persecuted Christians who cannot do anything about it from a human perspective? **He fast forwards the tape.** He points them to a future date that is on God's planner. People who hate Christ and hate Christians and persecute us or afflict us for our faith and following Jesus will one day be judged by Christ.

Paul is quite graphic in this description. Verse 9, "They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and

from the glory of his might." Our pain is temporal. Theirs is eternal. Our pain is light and momentary. Their pain is heavy and forever.

What Paul does in 2 Thessalonians 1 is so helpful. Why? He points them back to God's gameplan for His people and those who reject the gospel. *God has a future plan for both believers and for unbelievers and when we know His plan and rest in His plan we can still have peace and joy in life no matter what we are going through.*

When you are struggling to move forward in the faith because you know it will make your life more difficult from a human perspective go back to God's plan. Soak it in. Think of marinating meat before you put it on the grill. You soak the meat in something and you put it in a bag and you let it marinate for a while. You let it soak in something. **Friend, if you are going through a hard time soak your soul in God's plan.** Get your mind off of your plan or what you think is best in life and refocus upward and outward on the Lord.

God has a glorious future plan for you and whatever you suffer now will be worth it when Christ returns. Turn back to Habakkuk 3:17. One thing we see here at the end of Habakkuk is that Habakkuk is emotional but he is not controlled by his emotions he is controlling his emotions. His cultivation of his own emotions comes from meditating on God's future plan and letting it sink into his soul.

In Habakkuk 3:16 we see the prophet Habakkuk's honesty.

In Habakkuk 3:17-19 we see Habakkuk's:

2. Hope - Habakkuk 3:17-19

A jarring anticipation in verse 16 is followed by a joyful affirmation.

Habakkuk 3:17-19

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.
To the choirmaster: with stringed instruments.

What is Habakkuk doing in verse 17 in his description of the fig tree and the fruit on the vines and the produce of the olive and the fields that yield no food and the herds that are no longer in the stalls? He is looking ahead to what is going to happen when the Babylonians arrive where he lives. He is imagining what life is going to be like where he lives when the Babylonians show up. What they need for life and joy in life will be gone.

Verse 17 shows what will happen in Judah when Babylon invades. "When the invader occupies the land, plant life is stripped, and animals vanish from fold and stall." All of this was foretold in prior revelation. God told them again and again what would happen if they turned from Him to live for sin.

Richard Patterson, "The products and resources mentioned in v. 17 were vital to Israel's economy. In addition, the fig tree and the vine had spiritual significance, for they symbolized the blessing of God upon an obedient people (cf. Hos. 2:12; Amos 4:9 with 1 Kings 4:25 [HB 5:5]; 2 Kings 18:31; see also Ps. 105:33; Isa. 36:16; Jer. 5:17; 8:13; Joel 2:19, 24; Hag. 2:19; Zech. 3:10). Likewise, olive oil and the grain of the field (as well as the cattle) were objects of God's blessing (cf. Num. 18:12; Deut. 7:13; 11:14; 28:51; 2 Kings 18:32; Jer. 31:12; Joel 2:19; Hag. 1:11). Thus the failure of all these resources had serious economic and spiritual ramifications."

Listen - Habakkuk understood that God provided for Judah's physical and financial stability and God could also take it away through divine discipline. "Israel's prosperity was dependent on the nation's obedience to the covenant and on the Lord's consequent blessing. Such prosperity was forfeited by disobedience and disloyalty to the covenant, thus incurring the

Lord's chastening through natural and military disasters. In this vision of a devastated economy, Habakkuk acknowledges his nation's apostasy and the inevitability of judgment."

Habakkuk understands that life in Judah will never be the same. His jarring anticipation in verse 17 is followed by his joyful announcement in verses 18-19. Habakkuk resolves to do something. His new resolve and trust in the Lord are readily apparent. This should be in your notes:

Richard Patterson, "Habakkuk's new resolve and trust are immediately apparent (vv. 17–18). When the time of trouble comes for Judah, disrupting the productivity of the land and the security of the cattle, Habakkuk will not only remain at peace, resting in the sufficiency of God, but will rejoice through it in Him who alone is his (and Israel's) Savior. The words for "rejoicing*" here represent strong emotions. Habakkuk had used them previously to express his anxiety over the unbridled avarice of the Chaldeans (1:14–15). His choice of them here underscores his repentant heart and triumphant faith. Together they express his resolve not merely to rest in the Lord's will through everything that would come to pass but to rejoice fully in his saving God. Israel's covenant Lord was yet on the throne; that meant eventual blessedness for prophet and people alike (cf. Deut. 30:1–10)".

What is God's antidote for anxiety? 2 things:

1. Rest in God's Sovereignty
2. Rejoice in God's Majesty

God is sovereign and majestic. He is in complete control of the world He made and He puts His glory on display throughout His Word. When trouble comes rest in the sovereignty of God and rejoice in the majesty of God. Resolve afresh and anew to do both of these things.

One thing I remember about these verses is that one of my roommates in College used these verses in his wedding. These verses were quoted on the front of the bulletin. Habakkuk 3:17-18. I thought they were unique verses for a wedding at the time but now I think I understand why he chose them. **He was wiser than I used to give him credit for.** He was basically making a commitment that no matter what happens in their marriage they are committing to worship God. They would worship the God of Israel and rejoice in Him at all times no matter what. That was their commitment.

Is there anything our marriages need more than a commitment to worship God based on what we know to be true about him no matter what? That's really where marital stability comes from - two sinners reflecting on the grace of God and glorying in the cross of Christ and what it means to be His children and to be recipients of all divine blessings in Christ and praising God together forever. Is it encouraging to hear your spouse worshipping God? That's where our focus needs to remain because behind a frowning providence there hides a smiling face.

Habakkuk ends his prophecy not only with a pledge but with a praise. He reminds us in this last verse that God is worthy of our lives and He is worthy of our lips: Habakkuk 3:19, "The Lord God is my strength, and He has made my feet like hinds' feet, and makes me walk on my high places. For the choir director, on my stringed instruments."

Who will be Habakkuk's strength in the coming Babylonian invasion? Who will make him strong for the task at hand? The Lord God.

Jim Rosscup, "God, as the believer's strength, is the stability to keep him from slipping and falling to spiritual ruin. Treacherous troubles could cause one to falter or fall headlong, but God is able to give true grit (cf. Ps. 18; 27:1). He is a God of personal possession as "my salvation" and "my strength." Habakkuk paints a picturesque comparison in his prayer. In a spiritual sense God has made his feet to be like those of the "hind." The deer had sure-footed tenacity permitting it to walk without slipping on lofty, dangerous paths. Due to his admitted weakness in himself and the threatening situation, Habakkuk could plunge from the path in defeat. But his secret of security is the Lord who holds him up."

I just want to remind you in conclusion that the strength to live for the Lord is not something we work up from the outside. No. It comes from what the Holy Spirit works in our hearts. This is why the apostle Paul continually wrote truth to local churches and then prayed for the Holy Spirit to take the truth and make it effective. I'd like to close with a prayer that I return to time and time again.

Please turn to Ephesians 3:14. Ephesians 3:14-21 is an important prayer in Ephesians that connects two things - Salvation and the difference it should make in those who receive it the right way. Right before Paul moves to telling the church how to live in every major area in the Christian life he stops and prays. What does he pray?

Ephesians 3:14-21

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father,
15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named,
16 that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being,
17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love,
18 may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth,
19 and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.
20 Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us,
21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Where does Paul pray for God to work? In our hearts. The heart is the core of who we are. It's our mind and will and emotions. Everything we do on the outside flows from the condition of our hearts. Where do we need strength to live for the Lord? Our hearts. Who strengthens our hearts? God the Holy Spirit. What does God the Holy Spirit use to strengthen our hearts? The truths of the gospel.

Paul is not praying for the Holy Spirit to work apart from the truth, but to work in accordance with the truth. If you are struggling to obey the commands of Christ rehearse the gospel regularly and pray for the Holy Spirit to use the truth to strengthen your heart and then do what Jesus says. Align your will with His Word. Remember His power is made perfect in weakness.