

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

08.31.2025 | Rejoice in the Lord | Habakkuk 3:1-19 | Ben Day, Senior Pastor

If you have a Bible with you I want to invite you to turn with me to the book of Habakkuk chapter 3. It's going to be the last week for at least a while That you'll hear me ask you to turn to the book of Habakkuk We've been in this book for the month of August And we are ending our study today. Starting next week we're going to have a sermon series That takes us through the Apostles Creed The Apostles Creed will guide our fall As we study God's word together. So I hope you'll make plans to join us for that series. But also hope that this time in the book of Habakkuk has been helpful to you As we've learned what does it look like for us to live by faith.

So far we've seen in Habakkuk that the prophet Habakkuk has come to God. Twice Really in both times he's come with questions and complaints and doubts We've talked about how that is an aspect of living by faith When you have doubts, when you have questions, it doesn't mean you don't have faith In fact those things often come about because of the faith that we have But the call for the people of God is to, in our doubts and questions, come to God So twice Habakkuk has come to God and twice God has answered him. First he answered him with a more immediate response As to what was about to happen to the people of Israel and Judah at that time And then chapter 2 we saw last week God gave a more ultimate response As to how God was sovereign over all things And was one day going to bring judgment but also redemption and his glory to the whole earth So now we come to Habakkuk's third time of coming to the Lord.

This is the final chapter of Habakkuk, the last section we see is Habakkuk's third coming to God And in this time of coming to the Lord we'll see that there are some things that are somewhat similar from the beginning of the book Habakkuk's not a different person totally Some of the language, some of the things that he is expressing sound somewhat similar from chapter 1 But at the same time there are some stark differences in what Habakkuk is expressing What he's feeling, what he's saying between chapter 1 and chapter 3 There's this growth that has taken place even just over the course of a couple of chapters This maturity that has taken place and that's instructive for us To live by faith means there will be growth in our lives To live by faith means that yes we don't have it all together We're not perfect, we still have doubts, we still have questions, but we're on a journey And there should be movement in that journey. There should be fruit in our lives as we are seeing from Habakkuk here That we'd be able to come to a place where we find our joy in the Lord

So let me read Habakkuk, it's the whole of chapter 3 so it's a longer passage for us this morning Habakkuk chapter 3 verses 1 through 19 A prayer of Habakkuk, the prophet, according to the Shigianoth. O Lord, I have heard the report of you and your work, O Lord, do I fear. In the midst of the years revive it In the midst of the years make it known. In wrath remember mercy God came from Timon and the Holy One from Mount Peron Selah His splendor covered the heavens and the earth was full of his praise His brightness was like the light, raised flash from his hand And there he veiled his power. Before him went pestilence and plague followed at his heels He stood and measured the earth, he looked and shook the nations And the eternal mountains were scattered The everlasting hills sank low. His were the everlasting ways Saw the tents of Kashan in affliction The curtains of the land of Midian did tremble. Was your wrath against the rivers, O Lord? Was your anger against the rivers, or your indignation against the sea When you rode on your horses, on your chariot of salvation? You stripped the sheath from your bow, calling for many arrows Selah You split the earth with rivers The mountain saw you in ride, the raging water swept on The deep gave forth its voice, lifted its hands on high The sun and moon stood in their place The light of your arrows as they sped At the flash of your glittering spear You marched through the earth in fury You thrashed the nations in anger. You went out for the salvation of your people For the salvation of your anointed You crushed the head of the house of the wicked Laying him bare, thigh to neck. Selah 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 You trampled the sea with your horses The surging of mighty waters I hear 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 the people who invade us Though the fig tree should not blossom Nor the fruit beyond 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 Yet I will rejoice in the Lord. I will take joy in the God of my salvation God the Lord is my strength He makes my feet like the deers. He makes me tread on high places To the choir master of stringed instruments

When I was doing my doctoral studies My mentor and supervisor was Dr. Jim Shaddox Who passed away earlier this year. And when we were going through this program He lived on the other side of the country from me So we would talk every few months But it was always over FaceTime or Zoom. And I was a PhD student I was also a husband, a new father Working in ministry, so I was almost always behind on my schoolwork. Every time I was supposed to have a conversation with him I had not met the deadlines I was supposed to meet I was not keeping up with my work the way I was supposed to. Often entered into these conversations feeling overwhelmed Often discouraged and we would talk for about an hour. We would talk about life, about family, about ministry, about the schoolwork that I needed to do, he would pray for me, and we would end the call. And I left every one of those conversations Feeling encouraged Like a burden had been lightened a bit It was interesting because in that hour No papers had been written. No research had been done the circumstances really hadn't changed. But I had a new perspective because I had spent time with a godly man I had spent time with a father in the faith someone who was able to help me see things in a better way.

That is just but a small glimpse of what Habakkuk has experienced in this book. Habakkuk has not just spent time with a godly man He has spent time with God himself. And as he has communed with the Lord Even through complaints, even through doubts It has changed his perspective. The circumstances haven't changed. That will become really clear in this passage. But his perspective has changed Is what has led him from complaining to the Lord To rejoicing in the Lord And this is what I want us to consider today. As we've been on this journey with Habakkuk to consider What does it mean to live by faith? Yes, it's okay for us to complain to the Lord. It's okay for us to have doubts and questions and to come to him, seeking him. Keep coming to God But there should be this time In our growth of living by faith Where we come to a place where our perspective has changed And we can say, "I take joy in the God of my salvation". So I want to walk us through fairly quickly What we see here in chapter 3 Because I think Habakkuk gives us an example Of how he's arrived at this place Considering all that we've seen so far What does he do here in this passage That leads him to a place where he rejoices in the Lord A few steps for his example for us to follow We'll take the first two rather quickly And spend a little bit more time on the third and fourth.

What does Habakkuk do to rejoice in the Lord? First, he reflects on who the Lord is. This is something we've looked at throughout this book. So we're not going to spend a lot of time on it. And in fact, I wouldn't say Habakkuk spends a lot of time on it. But I think that there is a glimpse for us here in chapter 3 The part of what has led Habakkuk to the place where he is. At the end of the chapter when he can say "I take joy in the God of my salvation" "My strength is in the Lord" Is because he has taken the time to reflect on who the Lord is. So read in verse 1 that this is a prayer of Habakkuk And then in verse 2, there's the words of this prayer begin So in verse 2 he says, "O Lord, I've heard the report of you and your work" "O Lord, do I fear".

Now you read those opening words and you could just take it to mean that Habakkuk has heard about the work that God has done and is doing. And he is kind of afraid He says, "I fear your work" Other translations will translate that word fear into "I stand in awe of your ways". The idea of the fear of the Lord is prevalent throughout the Old Testament. And it doesn't simply mean being afraid of God. Well there is this aspect of fearing him but it's more about the reverence and the awe of God. And I think what Habakkuk says here that now he is in a position of fearing the Lord. I don't think he's just been reflecting on the ways of the Lord, even though that's what gets the focus here in chapter 3. But I think it's because he's been spending time with the Lord And reflecting on who the Lord is.

It kind of reminds me at the end of the book of Job If you ever read Job, you know that Job is experiencing a tremendous amount of suffering. He has this dialogue with his friends and then God shows up. For about four chapters, God just speaks to Job And just reveals his power and his might to Job And the last chapter, Job says "You know before I had heard the report of you But now it feels like for the first time I have seen you". And it kind of feels like that's what Habakkuk is saying here "Now that I've spent time with you I see who you are And I stand in awe of you".

You see if we don't take the time to stand in awe of who God is We'll most likely be afraid of the things going on but if we take the time to be in awe of who God is. We will fear the Lord, not our circumstances. So often if we don't take the time to be reflective of who God is We will stand in judgment of God in his ways Almost in the way Habakkuk was at the beginning Why would you do this, Lord? Why would you allow all these things to continue? But Habakkuk no longer stands in judgment He stands in awe of who God is Why? Because he has taken the time to commune with God To come to God to consider who God is. When you find yourself in the midst of a difficult season You find yourself surrounded by

circumstances that might cause fear Take the moments to reflect on who God is And to fear the Lord rather than your circumstances. So Habakkuk begins by considering who God is, reflecting on who God is and then he begins this prayer Or moves on next in this prayer to requesting that the Lord would work.

So here's the second step. You reflect on who God is and then secondly, you request that the Lord continue to work. Up until this point, again, Habakkuk has mostly brought complaints, questions, doubts. But here in chapter 3, Habakkuk brings requests. And I think that follows from what we just said, right? Habakkuk has taken the time to commune with God to reflect on who God is and now that he believes, again, his faith has been strengthened, that God is in control He is sovereign, that he is good, that he has good things for his people. He now asks God to work in accordance with his character. So go back to verse 2 again After he says, "Oh Lord, do I fear you in your work?" He says, "In the midst of the years, revive it In the midst of the years, make it known And in wrath, remember mercy

It's a three-fold request. To revive it, to reveal it, and to remember mercy Habakkuk says, "I've heard what God is going to do He is going to judge all the nations, all the kingdoms of the world, as we talked about last week He says, "God, I ask that as you do that, revive the work in your people. You've done it before, you've saved us, you've brought us to life as your people. Do that work again, revive us again. He says, "Reveal yourself God, I know we've turned from you, we've hidden our face from you. Do not hide yourself from us Reveal yourself and your work to us And then he says, "And even though we deserve judgment And even though judgment is coming, would you remember your mercy?" After taking the time to remember who God is, his character, his greatness, and his goodness. This is what Habakkuk has led to request God act in accordance with your character.

This is what we should pray. Yes, bring your doubts and your questions and your complaints by faith to God Voice those things to God, but after you've taken the time to spend with the Lord To remember who he is, then request that he continue to work. Bring those requests to him that he would do the work that he's done before. He would revive it. That he would continue to reveal himself in his work. That he would always, even in judgment, remember mercy. What Habakkuk does is as he requests this, he then moves into this poem. He moves into this song, you might have noticed at the very end of chapter 3 It gives an instruction to the one leading the choir or the music This was a song, this was a praise, and we really see that begin in verse 3. All of the chapter might have been included in it, maybe including verse 2 But really we see the poetic nature begin in verse 3 And what Habakkuk does in verse 3 is he begins to reflect not just on who God is. He's moved on from requesting, but now he's really recalling and considering the works of the Lord So the third step for us in rejoicing in the Lord is to remember what the Lord has done. He's remembered, reflected on who God is It's led him to request a work that God would do And he begins to really then kind of ground that request in what God has done in the past

Now when you read starting in verse 3, really through verse 15 Scholars and commentators are a bit divided on how to understand it It's a poetic passage, and so often I feel like with poetic language and prophetic language It can be a little unclear about how we're supposed to understand it. Some people would say, you know, you read this and you'll see the past tenses of the verbs that God has done these things. And a lot of the language is really similar to kind of describing the event of the Exodus How God brought his people out of Egypt and into the Promised Land. So it seems to be much of this, seems to be remembering what God had done in the past Now other people would say, well, the prophets often spoke of in the past tense about future events because God was revealing something he was going to do and it was so certain you could speak of it as if it was already done.

So maybe this isn't just remembering, but maybe this is also anticipating the work that God is going to do And I would say maybe it's not an either or. Maybe Habakkuk is drawing on the past and specifically using language of what God has already done to strengthen his faith of what God is going to do so we won't read every verse and dissect every verse in this passage, but let's just look at a few In verse 3, he says that God came from Timon, the Holy One from Mount Puran That word "sala" is often a reflective word, especially used in a psalm of praise His splendor covered the heavens and the earth was full of his praise. These locations are in the southern part of Israel, or Judah at this time It's where the people would have kind of entered into the Promised Land through It seems to be a recollection, at least in some way, of God bringing his people out of slavery and into this Promised Land. He didn't speak to that maybe more clearly in verse 5 He says, "As God was doing this, before him went pestilence, and plague followed out his heels" Now remember, when God brought his people out of Egypt, he used plagues All sorts of supernatural occurrences to free them from Egypt But then

even as they entered into the Promised Land, God used pestilence And other means to drive the people out, but there might be a place for his people.

So it seems to be, at least in some way, Habakkuk is remembering what God has done and why he did it. So in verse 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". He says he was shaking the nations, the nation of Egypt, other nations that were in the land He's remembering what God had done to bring his people to this place. Remembering is an important aspect of Scripture So often throughout Scripture we'll see the people of Israel, people of God, retell their stories, remember what God had done. The reason is we're often a very forgetful people. It can be good for us to be reminded, Habakkuk here, even if he's anticipating what God is going to do Is using the imagery of the past to remind himself of God's faithfulness, to see how God has worked in the past.

To help him trust that God's going to do that again in the future Isn't that at least part of the reason we come to the table this morning? To do this in remembrance of Jesus, we come regularly to remember. But also as we remember we anticipate the fact that one day he is going to come again That we will be with him around a much greater table in that day. Habakkuk here is remembering, now in verse 8 the language kind of shifts You noticed in verse 3 it was this third person, the Lord has done these things. And starting in verse 8 it becomes second person, he's speaking about the Lord And a lot of the language becomes a little bit more kind of cosmic in nature leading people to say this is about what God is going to do. See verse 8 he says, "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?" Habakkuk says, "Were you mad at the rivers, God?" Like God is turning the world upside down where he kind of says, "Are you upset at creation?"

And the answer is no. It wasn't against the earth that God was working God is working to redeem his creation. But it wasn't against the rivers even though God is kind of giving that imagery. And his cosmic salvation that is being pictured here. But what he's actually working for is the salvation of his people brings it to us in verse 13, he says, "You went out for the salvation of your people. God's wrath wasn't against the rivers, his heart was for his people. The salvation of your anointed, you crushed the head of the house of the wicked Laying him bare from thigh to neck. Habakkuk has gone from a place of wondering what God is doing, complaining that God is idle, to remembering what God has done. And even praising God for what he know that he will do.

This should be the path of faith for us as the people of God. Again, I do believe in living by faith there is room for doubts and questions. We should be able to bring those things to God. And I said before, I hope that we will be a church always that welcomes the doubts and the doubters, the questions and the skeptics. Hope that we will be places for them in our community groups and discipleship groups. That every time you ask a question or express a doubt or a complaint you're not viewed as having no faith or being a bad Christian because there's example after example in the Bible of that being an expression of our faith.

But at the same time, there's example after example in the Bible Of people who begin there but don't end there. They come to God with questions, but they end with praising God in the same way Habakkuk is here as he recounts what God has done, he is praising God for what he knows that he will do. That's what we want to encourage in our church. Come with your doubts and your questions and your complaints Let us walk alongside of each other to grow to a place where we are praising God. We are remembering the works that he has done in our. Maybe just even in this moment God might remind you of how he has shown his faithfulness to you. God might remind you of how he has shown his goodness to you. As we remember what God has done, we trust in what he is going to do.

And that leads us to where Habakkuk ends the whole book. And that is rejoicing in the Lord even in the midst of sorrow. So the final step in this whole process You begin by considering who God is, bringing your request to God. You strengthen your faith by remembering what God has done allowing that to lead you to trusting, praising what he is going to do but then you rejoice in him. I mentioned earlier that there are things about Habakkuk that have changed. We see that there in chapter 3 as he is not just complaining but he is praising. Writing a psalm for other people to be able to praise alongside of him the works of God. But there are some things that haven't changed Habakkuk's circumstances haven't changed In fact, he just knows it's going to get worse Listen to how honest he is in verse 16 Transparency and honesty

haven't left Habakkuk He says, "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 the people who invade us".

Sometimes when people say you need to rejoice in the Lord People hear that and they think it means. Well you need to put on a happy face And act like everything is okay. You need to come to church and just talk about all the good things And kind of forget about the bad things. That's not what we see in the Bible In reference to Job earlier, Job says, "tore his garments, he mourned and he worshipped". Those two things were happening simultaneously Paul says in 2 Corinthians, "we are always rejoicing yet ever sorrowful". There was a time in his life when Paul is going through a season of grief, hardship, heartache And yet he says, "I'm rejoicing". Here Habakkuk may not look like a man who has joy He says his whole body is trembling Lips are quivering, his legs feel uneasy and yet he has joy in the Lord. You can rejoice not just once the sorrow passes, but even in the midst of sorrow. You can rejoice not by acting like the grief or the pain or the fear, the sorrow isn't there. But actually in the midst of that, rejoicing because your joy is found not in your circumstances but in the Lord

So Habakkuk says, "my circumstances could grow to be really bad" Verse 17, "though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines The produce of the olive fail and the field yield no food The flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls". What's Habakkuk describing here? This is the worst situation you can imagine. I mean, he's saying there's no fruit being produced, there's no food being produced, there's no animals for us to eat In this agrarian society, he is talking about total economic collapse, but also total societal collapse. People dying of starvation. He says, "even if that were to happen, I will rejoice in the Lord"

I know some of you are going through really difficult seasons of life right now. Sometimes we look around the world, we don't see how God's working in some of the different situations in the world We struggle to have joy. Habakkuk says, "even if the circumstances grow to be the worst that I can imagine, I will have joy in the Lord". Think of an example of a missionary, 1851, an English missionary named Alan Gardner He was on a mission trip with a group and they were shipwrecked on a remote island and eventually they all died of starvation, there's just nothing there for them to sustain life on and Alan Gardner kept a journal that was later found. Throughout that time of people dying around him, he was recounting scripture About how God will meet every one of our needs, always provides And even in his last days as he was dying, Alan Gardner wrote, "I am overwhelmed with a sense of God's goodness". Even though there was no fruit, there was no food, there was no hope for even life here on earth around Gardner He had a joy in the Lord That type of joy is available to you. A type of joy that does not leave with every circumstance or season because it's a joy that is found in the Lord Verse 18, "I will rejoice in the Lord" "I will take joy in the God of my salvation". Back he could spend so much time with the Lord, remembering what the Lord has done He now says, "My joy is in the Lord"

And I think it's actually this whole hard season that's brought this about Do you notice what he says in verse 19, he says, "God the Lord is my strength He makes my feet like the deers, he makes me tread on my high places". He's describing as if he is standing on the and he says, "I'm like a deer, deer were known to be very sure-footed on the mountain top" It's easy to fall when you're up there, but the deer were very adept at being on the mountain range He says, "It's like I'm now at the top, and my footing is sure". But he just said, "My bones are rotting away, my lips are quivering" He just said, "It's going to get terrible in my circumstances" How could he describe himself at the mountain top?

I think it's been this difficult season that he has walked through and coming to the Lord that has actually pushed him to the top of the mountain spiritually. You see the trials and the difficulties and the hard seasons of life actually have the power through God's Spirit to propel you up the mountain spiritually to put you in high places. Even when you're in the valley of the shadow of death, you can be walking on the mountain top because at this moment you know that your joy is in the Lord. See so many times we think our joy is in the Lord but our joy is actually in the things that the Lord gives us. We think we are taking our joy and our strength from God but we are really just finding those things in the blessings that God has given us But in those moments when all else is taken away when all we have left is God, it shows us where our true joy is found Back at Gethsemane, this trial, this season has actually worked to bring my joy solely to be in the Lord and now I feel like I'm on the mountain top. Why? Because this is the God of my salvation that my joy is in The one who has saved his people in the past and I know will save us again. This kind of joy is available to you because God can be the God of your salvation.

I've said this before but we look at the book of Habakkuk and we see the hope that he has in certain moments. The faith that he has, I would say we have even more reason to have that hope and that faith because what Habakkuk looks back to in the Exodus and God freeing his people from slavery and from Egypt and bringing them into a promised land was just a picture of the salvation that we have the opportunity to look back on. When God sent Jesus and did not just free his people from Egypt but freed them from sin and death. When God did not just bring his people into a promised land that they might one day be taken captive out of but he brought us into his kingdom and we will never be removed from it. Even what Habakkuk was getting a vision of in God's greater salvation to come, we have experienced in Jesus that we can say as we come to the table this morning My joy, my hope is in the God of my salvation, in Christ. That even as you have sorrow and grief, fear and pain, you can have joy. You can have joy in God, in what he has done and what you know he's going to do.

Jonathan Edwards preached his very first sermon at the age of 18. It was a sermon that basically was an argument for why Christians should be happy, he said. He gave three kind of points to his argument for why Christians should be happy people, joyful people. He said, "We should be happy because our bad things will turn to good". Romans 8, 28, "God is working together all things for good". He says, "Even the sorrows, even the pains, even the worst seasons of life, God is working them for good". "Our bad things will turn to good, our good things can never be taken from us". He says, "The best things we have in this life, forgiveness of our sins, being united to Jesus Christ, being adopted into his family, can never be taken from you". "Yeah, there may be no fruit on the vine, it might be an economic collapse, you might lose everything, but the best things you have in life can never be removed". And then he says, "And actually our best things are still yet to come". "Our bad things will be turned to good, our good things can never be taken, and our best is still yet to come".

We can say that this morning. We can say that as we come to the table. As we look back, we see that God was working even sinful actions to kill an innocent man for good. We come to the table and we can say that we have been forgiven of our sins. We have a communion with God and with each other that cannot be taken from us. And we do know that one day he will return. One day we will be part of the marriage supper of the Lamb. The best is still yet to come, so rejoice in the Lord today. Take joy in the God of your salvation.