Yet I Will Rejoice

Chad Bailey | Midway Presbyterian Church | Morning Service | September 27, 2026

Scripture: Habakkuk 3:17-19

Introduction

These verses are no doubt a favorite amongst God's people, there are other well-known passages, even in the book of Habakkuk, and you perhaps have memorized them. And in many ways, this climax of the book, it is meant in many ways to reorient, to settle, to encourage, to strengthen hearts, to put steel in our spine, if you will, to lift drooping hands and strengthen wobbling knees. It's like reading Romans 5:8 or 6:23 or 8:28-39 and those wonderful passages that remind us of gospel truths and eternal truths that reorient our thoughts and even our problems - that put them in perspective. They certainly convict in a in a manner of speaking, but they bring courage and calm in the face of what seems wrong in the world and trying to make sense of things in our own life and what goes on all around the world in the church and in ourselves, to see the Lord at work. It's a reminder that as we sing sometimes, “Though troubles assail us and dangers afright, though friends should all fail and foes all unite, yet one thing secures us. Whatever betide, the promise assures us. The Lord will provide.”

That's what Habakkuk has come to the bottom of here. And Habakkuk is not contemplating some minor inconvenience of course - the Babylonians are coming. They will be devastating. They aren't coming to make a treaty, but to conquer. The invasion will bring horrors perhaps that we cannot fully comprehend. We think of things that are certainly bad and evil, things like the Holocaust. We think of things that are horrible and terrifying like the Great Depression. And put all of those things together and you see the things that Jerusalem was facing, that Judah was facing as the Babylonians would come and invade. We find these very things told to us in 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles. Jeremiah would talk about them and describe what would be the reality for God's people as judgment comes rolling in be 18 months of siege - severe famine. At the time Zedekiah would be captured and his sons killed before him. He’s blinded and taken to Babylon. People are taken into exile, their walls torn down, the temple is ransacked, houses burned. But worse, Lamentations gives us a taste, a feel for the horrors of it. People were trading treasures for scraps of food, infants and children fainting and dying in the streets, mothers driven to horrible things, young and old slain without pity, women assaulted, orphans left destitute, a broken society. Perhaps on and on goes the list. And what Habakkuk is describing here in verse 17 are the outcomes of the covenant curses God had warned his people about in Deuteronomy 28, the horrors of it.

And in the midst of that, in the face of that, knowing what's coming, Habakkuk is saying, "Yet I will rejoice." It's what faith looks like. It's a profession of faith, if you will. He's trembling at what God has already said and what's going to come and having to wait for that day. It's what life is like for the people of God. Having to trust though trembling and waiting and yet there's a joy. He's rejoicing, trembling and trusting and rejoicing. It's what faith looks like. All that doctrine is brought to bear here in Habakkuk's prayer. This whole chapter is him praying and coming to the culmination of it all. This is what that doctrine, where leads to and what trust in

the Lord looks like. Faith rejoicing in the Lord in the face of suffering. And that's what you see in Habakkuk.

I. The Suffering Faith Endures

I want you to notice three things regarding that. The suffering faith endures. Look at again in verse 17. The suffering faith endures. Faith certainly is the conviction of things not seen as the New Testament will tell us. And faith may have to exist where there's destitution and desperation, difficult circumstances as he's describing here. Habakkuk is describing certainly devastated land and economy, things that would be experienced privately and corporately. You might say the implications religiously with this - no figs, no grapes, no olives and many of the basic things of life, no crops, staples of life, ordinary things that sustain life might be taken away, but even the luxuries that go along there. Think of all of the things that would be made with all of that, figs and grapes and olives and think of the uses of all of those things for the everyday common sorts of things and the luxuries of life and the believing remnant would have to face those kinds of things. It's what Habakkuk is bracing himself for and life perhaps feels that way, bracing for something that you know is inevitable. Fearing the worst, struggling to wonder how to endure, how to press on, knowing that you will indeed have to face. Isn't that what life is like? It's knowing that something's coming and perhaps fearing even the worst and knowing it's going to come. It's inevitable. It's a suffering that God's people face. And sometimes the suffering is terrible. It's tragic. It's defined as loss. It's heartbreaking.

Sometimes it seems relentless to wait for it, seems worse than to actually experience it sometimes. As Habakkuk is thinking on those things, you wonder what is the point? Don't you ask that question sometimes? What is the point of the trials, the troubles, the difficulties, the suffering in all its various forms? As James would say, the trials of various kinds and all the hardships and heartache and difficulty that come along with it. What's the point?

We ask that question sometimes and wonder, "Is because of my sin? Is it because of some national sin, someone else's sin, some unrepentant sin in the church maybe?" Sometimes we can't know. The Lord had told them why this was coming, why the Babylonians were coming and in some sense, yes, connected to sin. But we trace those things out in our own lives and the trials and the sufferings and sometimes we don't know.

Get to the bottom of it and Habakkuk still is trembling and he's troubled by those things in verse 16. That doesn't mean that he lacks faith, his trembling and concern and heartache. No, faith is responding to the word of God there. And he's considering those things very seriously. And yet, it's meant, isn't it, to draw him closer to the Lord. It's what happens at the end of the book of Job and all the suffering, and not all the questions get answered. It's not tied up nice and neat all the time. Suffering is messy and there's trouble. And we'll read these things in verse 17 in a few seconds. It's a few lines, but it would be beyond difficult, it'd be devastating. They find themselves in destitution. And that's what faith has to endure. That kind of suffering. It's not the power of positive thinking and just be a positive person. No, it is conviction of things unseen, of things not seen. That's the way the author of Hebrews describes such faith and trusting the Lord in the middle of it all, right in the very worst of times, in the worst of things. He's not pretending everything's fine. It's not a "fake it till you make it" kind of way of living. He's not denying what's coming. You can't avoid it. It's going to come, he's saying. And it looks beyond what is seen. That's what faith does. It looks beyond what is seen to the God who

promises and makes promises, the God who can't be lost. It's certainly a reminder as you read this passage, a reminder that the things of this world cannot satisfy us. It's an application, I suppose, that you would take from such a passage. But it is a matter of faith to endure suffering and trials of various kind. Destitution is not a sign of the absence of faith. Faith does not guarantee any certain level of comfort. Suffering is endured and endured by faith.

Jesus and the Storm

JC Ryle in his commentary on Mark chapter 4, with the great storm passage when Jesus intentionally takes his disciples into a storm. He leads them there and they have obeyed him. They aren't being punished and he's taking them into a great storm and they are greatly afraid for their life. That's not some throwaway words. They're afraid. They are frightened, scared to death. They think they're going to die. And they wake Jesus up and ask Him, "Do you not care that we are perishing?" And it's remarkable, isn't it? Here's the Lord of glory, the one who made them, who is about to control the wind and the waves, and He's in the boat with them. He certainly does care for them. And the same thing's true for God's people always. And it was when the Lord controlled the wind and the waves by just speaking that then they feared a great fear. Their eyes were diverted elsewhere upon the Lord. And JC Ryle in commenting on that says,

> *"If we are true Christians, we must not expect everything will be smooth in our journey to heaven. We must count it no strange thing if we have to endure sicknesses, losses, bereavements, and disappointments just like other people. A free pardon and full forgiveness, grace by the way and glory to the end, all this our savior has promised to give. But he has never promised that we shall have no afflictions. He loves us too well to promise that. By affliction, He teaches us many precious lessons without which it would never be learned. By affliction, he shows us our emptiness and weaknesses, draws us to the throne of grace, purifies our afflictions, weans us from the world, makes us long for heaven. In the resurrection morning, we shall all say, "It is good for me that I was afflicted." We shall thank God for every storm.*

That's where Habakkuk is leading, where he directs our attention - that yes, faith might have to endure suffering. It's what faith looks like. It endures suffering. It is the way of the Savior. You see our Lord Jesus suffering. And it is the way of the cross to live that way as well, live by faith

II. The Savior That Faith Treasures

That directs us secondly to the Savior that faith treasures. Not only the suffering faith endures but the Savior that faith treasures. Look in verse 18. It's the famous line. We all love it. We know it. We have it memorized perhaps even. But it's meant for those very times of great trial and trouble and heartache of various kinds, small and great. “Yet I will rejoice in the Lord.” Everything in verse 17 seems like despair, doesn't it? It's discouraging and it's suffering and the circumstances haven't changed. But it's Habakkuk as we often know, his gaze has changed. His perspective has changed. Yet I will rejoice. In many ways, this is reminding us that joy is not found and never will be found - ultimate joy, lasting treasures, satisfaction will never be found in the things of this world. It's what the Lord teaches us so often, directs our gaze to Him who is all satisfying - joy being found in the Lord and having Him. It's why we're directed so often by our Lord and Savior - that one's life is not found in the abundance of his possessions. The psalmist would remind us that the Lord's steadfast love is better than life. The Apostle Paul would remind us that to have the Lord is better. To be absent from the body is to be home with

the Lord - and that is far better he would say. We're reminded of that very truth - in the midst of suffering, it's what faith says and how faith responds - to rejoice in the Lord. That's what he's come to the point of saying. You can have all this world, as one hymn writer put it. You can have all this world. Give me Jesus. I would rather have the Lord and suffer than have everything in this world can offer without him. It's what the author of Hebrews describes in Hebrews 11 for us. All the heroes of the faith, as we say, had to live through some hard times, difficult times. And Moses said, "I would rather have Christ and suffer reproach - the reproach of Christ, than have all the treasures of Egypt." Pile them all up together and Christ is far better.

That's what he's doing. And we might say to ourselves, salvation is wonderful, isn't it? We love to think about our salvation, my salvation, your salvation, and to think what is entailed in that - forgiveness of sin, peace with God, reconciliation with God, fellowship with God. These realities we have through Christ, and they do make us joyful, and we sing about them, rightly so. But Habakkuk takes us perhaps deeper than that. And indeed, he does take us deeper than that.

The Lord Himself Is Our Treasure

It's not just dwelling upon the grace of God and his salvation but upon God himself, that is the blessing. That is ultimate joy and satisfaction. It is God. To have Him is to have all. To have Christ is to have all. That's why the psalmist Asaf was brought to that very point when he entered into the sanctuary and worshiped. It all became clear. He was reminded of what he had, not simply what others had and what would be taken away, what could be taken away and lost. It's, as was prayed earlier, that which neither moth nor rust can destroy. It's treasures in heaven. Psalm 73.

> *Nevertheless, I am continually with you. You hold my right hand. You guide me with your counsel. Whom have I in heaven but you? There is nothing on earth that I desire beside you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.*

That's where the Lord would lead us - to rely upon Him, to remember that the Lord ultimately is our greatest treasure. We love, certainly because He first loved us. And we know that it is in this that is love, not that we have loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be a propitiation for our sins. That is love. And the Lord has poured that into our hearts. But as a reminder here, this is what faith thinks and how faith lives and acts - to see the Lord as first in our hearts, utmost important to us.

That is the Christian's joy, ultimate joy, not in what God gives, not merely in the salvation that is ours, but in the God of our salvation. You see Habakkuk saying that - I will rejoice in the Lord, in Him. I will take joy in the God of my salvation, not just in the benefits, but in the one who saves me by His grace. The one who sent His Son to be that propitiation for our sins. The one who gave for us and for our salvation. Him, I love Him. My soul rests in Him and in Him alone. He's the God of our salvation and He alone is all the treasure we need. Let us cast our eyes upon Jesus and look full in His wonderful face and the things of the earth will go strangely dim, won't they? In the light of His glory and grace. That's what Habakkuk is saying. That's what he's saying. Take everything I have. Take it all. I have everything I need. I will rejoice in the Lord. That's where faith walks. That's how faith lives. That's what faith looks like. It's trusting the Lord in the midst of great suffering, great trial and pressures and trouble that seem never ending perhaps, that seem horrifying. You might fear, even fear the worst. Don't you think of that sometimes, maybe not exactly these covenant curses that that fell upon Israel, but

perhaps it is no money left in the bank account, some sickness coming to claim, trouble at home, trouble at work, death. We fear those things. We fear a lot of things the Lord might take. And Habakkuk would lead us to say, "My greatest treasure is the Lord Himself. And though everything is taken away, and I have nothing - I ultimately have everything in the Lord." Isn't that what faith looks like? It's the promise of the gospel for those who trust in the Lord. It's why it is exactly why, the New Testament would tell us and Paul certainly is telling us to “rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I say rejoice.” Why? Because I might suffer as Paul would say. He's applying that to righteousness that comes through Christ. It's applied to all his worldly goods and everything that made him up as a Pharisee and thinking about himself in those terms and all that he was. He says, "I count all those things as loss. In fact, they're like rubbish compared to the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord." There's nothing better, nothing greater than to know the Lord, to be reconciled to Him. Yes, to know the wonders of His love, but to have Him and to know Him, and to rejoice in knowing Him. That's where Habakkuk would take us.

III. The Strength Faith Receives

We'll notice lastly the strength faith receives and needs. He's making these declarations, certainly commitments. I will rejoice. It's a commitment to do those things. But notice what that relies upon. God, the Lord is my strength. He is the one who makes these things happen. He makes my feet like the deer’s. He makes me tread on my high places. All of my hope is cast upon Him, to love Him more than anything to live by faith and not by sight. To rejoice in Him, I need His strength. My hope is in Him. My dependence is upon the Lord who strengthens me. This phrase “like the deer's feet” is used elsewhere in Scripture and it's the imagery of perhaps swiftness to evade enemies but also steadiness and stability. And he's saying something like that - the Lord and His strength makes me stable like the deer, certainly swift if you will, but He's the one who secures me through difficult places, it's Him that I rely upon. It's grace to walk through the troubles and the suffering and the sorrows. It's exactly the way in which David would pray in Psalm 23. He (the Lord) makes me lie down. He's the one who leads me beside the still waters. He makes me lie down in green pastures and it's a trust in the Lord. The “high places”, this reference to the high places, makes me tread on my high places. It's a reference to, an allusion to victory even. Certainly, a reminder of safety, but it's an allusion. That phrase to tread on the high places is an allusion to conquering and what people would do who were victorious. They would tread on the high places and survey. How can Habakkuk pray such things? He's praying like Paul would pray of course later in Romans 8 “We are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.” You see, all might look dark and bleak and troubling and suffering might be around the corner and perhaps happening now in your life. Maybe there's trial and trouble now or up ahead and we have to wait. But it's a sure promise that the Lord is our strength. He is the one who holds us fast. He holds His people fast and He makes them more than conquerors. You see, it's I think a reference certainly even to the very end of things, even to the to the resurrection, that great resurrection day. It's why Paul would say in in 1 Corinthians 15, the way he talks about death even and that the believer can because of Christ know that the sting of death has been removed. You can sing over the grave as it were. Why? Because our Savior has risen and conquered. He is the one who came to destroy the works of the devil. He came to save and deliver from sin, from the flesh and the world and the devil. And He has done that and is doing that and has promised to do that. He who began a good work, He will complete it, won't He? That's why he's saying what he's saying in verse 19. And the Lord has

brought him to that point where he's fixed upon the Lord, knowing that the trouble might not go away. But it is the Lord who is sovereign over and in and through and around the trouble. He not only brings it, but walks with His people through it and assures them of safety, ultimate safety. That's why we love this passage. It's what Habakkuk has come to. It's the wonders of texts like John 6 and John 10. And the way in which Jesus will talk about the double grip of the Father and the Son. The Father has you in His right hand and none can take you from it and I have you in my right hand and none can snatch you from it. The double grip is safe and secure. That's what Habakkuk is resting upon. In fact, that's what Habakkuk is singing about, wanting to be sung. You see, it may seem like a little bit of a throwaway, I suppose, but it's not. “To the choir master with stringed instruments.” Habakkuk wanted God's people to sing like this, to sing with joy in the Lord in the very face of trouble and trial and sorrow and heartache and turmoil and devastation and destitution and all of it from the smallest of things to the greatest of things, to sing with joy - because the Lord who is our strength, He lived our Lord. He lived and He died and He rose again and we can as we sing sometimes, we can face tomorrow and the next day and the next day because He who promised is faithful. He will surely do it. He is our strength.

Conclusion: The Lord Will Provide

And so we prefer Christ, knowing that it is better for us to be without all worldly riches and comforts and ease than without Christ in His word. We surely should be resolved to cleave to Christ and to the Lord our God and joyfully live by faith in Him. That's where Habakkuk leads us. That He would be our vision, the Lord would be our vision, the Lord of our heart, naught all else to us be saved that thou art. So may the Lord himself continue to provide that grace of life for His people, people of this generation and beyond - by that faith that justifies in the Lord Jesus Christ. May He do so for His glory and our good.