

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Praise the Lord Anyhow

Scripture: Habakkuk 3:1-19

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If you have your Bibles with you turn to the book of Habakkuk, the Old Testament. We're coming to the end of our little time with Habakkuk and I kind of feel badly about it because I've sort of gotten to love him. I've spent an awful lot of hours with him every week and I just kind of have a kindred spirit with Habakkuk in many, many ways, and I'm sure you do to.

Tonight's message is concerning Chapter 3 of Habakkuk and in this chapter we will find ourselves in much of the time summarizing things that we have already noted about him and perhaps pulling them together in a little different perspective. Habakkuk Chapter 3:1-19, which encompasses the entire chapter, is what we want to talk about tonight. And the title of the message is noted in the bulletin is Praise the Lord Anyhow and that title probably gives away a little of the attitude of Habakkuk by the time he arrives in Chapter 3.

If you'll go back in your mind you'll remember that his basic dilemma was why God was allowing Israel to go down the drain as fast as she was, and then why in the world God ever allowed the Chaldeans to be able to come in and destroy Israel. He couldn't figure out why God would let Israel get this far away from Him and then he couldn't figure out why God would use such an ungodly unholy crew as the Chaldeans to come in to bring judgment upon Israel, and he was puzzled and perplexed by what he did not understand. And then we found last week that he really found out a good way to end his dilemma.

Instead of standing staring in the face of his problem he backed off from the problem and he stood on solid ground. He gave up on what he didn't know and started remembering what he did know and instead of worrying about why things were going the way they were going, and why in the world God was allowing this and allowing that, he just stood back and said, "Now wait a minute, my God is an eternal God, He's a righteous God, He can't stand sin, He's got to punish sin, He never does wrong, He always does right," and He began to tie down in his own mind that which he knew about God.

Once he had established what he did know about God then it was much easier to cope with what he didn't know about the events around him. Now when we come to Chapter 3, God has already given him the answer. God told him that He was going to bring the Chaldeans to destroy Israel and Habakkuk said, "But God, what about the Chaldeans, they're worse than the Jews are?" And God

had told him in Chapter 2 that God was also going to deal with the Chaldeans, that they would be totally destroyed. And so God has completely answered his prayer and in Chapter 3 we have the response of Habakkuk to the answer of God. He responds to the revelation of God concerning his problem.

And what it is, is really a prayer the very first verse says a prayer of Habakkuk, the prophet upon Shigionoth. Now that's the name of some kind of a musical instrument. And you can see at the end of verse 19 that he talks about that this should be given to the chief singer on my stringed instrument. So it has the character of a prayer and yet it also embodies Hebrew poetry, very beautiful piece of poetry. And in this prayer poem we find how Habakkuk learns to praise the Lord anyhow.

Before we get into it let's just have a word of prayer. Our Father, we're so thankful tonight that we can carry our minds these thousand years to the very day in which Habakkuk lived and kind of crawl inside his problem and his dilemma and understand something about it, and so understand our own problems a little bit better. God, open our minds to the teaching of the Spirit of God. May Christ alone be exalted. In His name we pray. Amen.

This chapter is a great prayer. It is a classic example of prayer. Habakkuk's attitude in his prayer is simply this: God I don't understand everything, I don't understand why You let Israel go, I don't understand why You're bringing the Chaldeans to judge them, I don't understand why You're going to wait to judge the Chaldeans after that, I don't understand any of the things, but I know one thing God, You're the God that is righteous, You're the God that's eternal, You're the God that never makes a mistake, You're the God that hates sin, You're the God that never does anything wrong and I'll stand on that and praise You anyhow.

And so in Chapter 3 he begins his prayer. His prayer embodies four parts that really are the parts of every prayer. They are petition, remembrance, and natural consequence to remembrance, which is praise, confession and adoration. Petition, remembrance, confession and adoration: the four parts of his prayer that are really the four parts of any prayer that is a prayer.

Let's look first of all at his petition in verse 2. The first thing he's going to do is ask God for something. Now right away he's going to set himself apart from us by what he asks God. Watch in verse 2. "O Lord I have heard Thy speech and was afraid." God has just talked to him in Chapter 2 and told him that He's going to deal with the Chaldeans because He always deals with sin. "I've heard Thy speech and was afraid. O Lord revive Thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known;" and then he adds, "in wrath remember mercy."

Now look at his position. He is standing in the midst of an absolute dilemma. He is afraid. He is afraid for himself, he's afraid for Israel. He can't seem to justify and rectify all the parts of the puzzle, though he understands that God who made the puzzle is always right. He's caught in a dilemma, but notice

he does not ask for deliverance, he does not ask for personal escape, he does not ask for ease, he does not pray that God should spare Israel, he doesn't even pray that there would be no victory for the Chaldeans and that they would lose the battle, he doesn't pray that Jerusalem wouldn't be sacked, he doesn't pray any of these things because he knows in view of the kind of God that God is, God must judge. So he doesn't even bother with those things. What he does pray is this: that God will do His work. What a tremendous truth. He knows how to pray, contrary to most of us, who are described in Romans 8:26, when the Bible says that the Spirit helps our infirmity for we know not what to pray for as we ought. He knows what to pray for. He's not praying selfishly, he's not praying biased in favor of his flesh or his people. He is praying singularly that God's work come to fulfillment.

He's come to the conclusion that God's going to judge. He came to that conclusion in Chapter 1 verse 13, when he said, "I know God you've got to do something 'cause you can't stand sin. You're a God who can't look upon iniquity." You've got to take care of it, I know that, I'm aware of that God and I'm not asking to beg off, I'm not praying that you change your plan. You can't do that because of the kind of God You are, but I have one burden, God, and that's that Your work come to fulfillment, that Your purpose come to its completeness. God I only care that You be able to work out what You want.

Well I'll tell you when you can arrive at that kind of position in prayer you have arrived. When you can look at the problems around you and the problems in your life and the problems in your world and say God I don't care about those things, all I care about, God, is that whatever happens to me or anybody else that You be glorified. What a tremendous, tremendous prayer. He had one through in his mind and that was that God receive the due glory for doing His work. He says, God, if you've got to do it that way I want you to do it revive Your work in the midst of the years.

His one desire was that things be right according to God's plan, not comfortable according to his desires. Not peaceful, not easy, not happy, just right like God would have them. He wanted things to be the way God wanted them, and if you want a New Testament equivalent to that kind of a prayer you'll find it in the prayer commonly called the Lord's Prayer, Thy kingdom come. That prayer is simply a prayer that God rule in the way that God intends to rule. That all things be right under the plan of God and that's essentially what Habakkuk was praying for. He was simply saying God if You're going to do it this way bring Your purpose to realization. Let Your kingdom come in the way You want it to come, as if to say whatever I suffer, whatever my people suffer is of no concern as long as Your work is revived and kept pure. That's all that really matters.

You see Habakkuk had made a fantastic transformation from fear to faith. He started out shaking like a leaf in Chapter 1, and he's come to the consciousness of faith in a God that he knows is doing right. Now we're going to see in a little while how he still has a hang up with the fear thing from another angle.

You know this is a tremendous thought, though, the fact that he didn't care about himself, all he cared about was God's plan. I think it's appropriate for the church. If we're not really more concerned for the purity of the church of Jesus Christ, and for the fact of wars and threats around us, then we're in a sad state in our own Christian experience. Let me ask kind of another angle. What's your main worry in this world? Is it the threat of Communism? Are you hung up on all of the world events? Is politics the thing that worries you most, or the riots going on, on the campus the thing that occupies your thoughts and creates fears in your mind? Are those the things that are the most troublesome to you? What is your main consciousness? Where is the area of your worry? What is it that you fear most of all? Is it that the church of Jesus Christ might for one split second be impure? Is that it? That's what it ought to be.

Is your greatest worry in this world that God's glory is not going to be preeminent in your life? Is your greatest worry in this church as a member and a part of Grace Community Church is your greatest fear that something might come in here and somehow might slight the Spirit of God? Is your greatest worry that something might come into our fellowship and our family that would cause a stumbling block to someone else? Or are you hung up on world events? I'll tell you if you're thinking like Habakkuk thought you couldn't care less about world events. You could care less about what happens in the family of God and the church of Jesus Christ.

This is why I get so bothered by these people who are forever and always on the anti-communism kick. Now I'm anti-Communist. You never met anybody more anti-Communist 'cause I'm pro Christ and eliminates Communism altogether. I'll tell you one thing, you can preach anti-Communism until you are purple in the face and you can take away a man's Communism and all you've got is a man without Communism. On the other hand you can give him Jesus Christ and you've solved both problems. And I think some people spend so much of their time crusading against everything that they never have a positive thing to say.

I'll tell you when you become more concerned about world events and all the things that are going against the world and all the problems that are in the world than you do about the purity of the body of Christ, than you do about the health of the body of Christ, that you do about the fact that this church should be a saved, surrendered, soul winning church set apart, when you become more concerned about world events than that then you've lost the real reflection on what God wants out of your prayers. Don't be primarily concerned with that; your primary concern and mine ought to be for the glory of the almighty God for the health and the condition of His church, for the future of His cause among men, and for my own relationship to Him. That should be infinitely more magnified than anything I care about this world. That's not to say that I go through life with blinders on. That's not it at all, but it's the idea of what's your main concern. It ought to be what Habakkuk's was that God receive the glory in every age.

And our prayer ought to sound something like Habakkuk's. We ought to be praying daily God be glorified in my life. God be glorified in my church. God be glorified in this world. That should be the cry and the prayer on the heart of every believer.

How often this week did that burden weigh you down? Were you much more oppressed by the riots and how they were going to resolve themselves? Were you much more impressed by the threat of Communism than you were the glory of God, the purity of His church?

Habakkuk wasn't. Habakkuk had the right perspective. You see he had first things first. What really mattered to him was not the circumstances in the world around him, although there were unbelievably bleak. The thing that really mattered to him was that God receive the glory. That's what mattered. And I'll tell you that ought to be the thing that matters number one to us. That whatever happens in the world is going to happen and if there are wars now there's going to be more wars. And if there's no peace now there's not going to be any peace in the future of this world until Christ comes. That shouldn't be our concern. Our concern should be the things of God that God's work is coming to its fulfillment.

But then at the end of verse 2, Habakkuk kind of adds a little note, it's kind of a tender touching little thing, he says, "God I want You to do Your work," and then he sort of adds a P.S. "God in wrath remember," what, "mercy." Isn't that good? He says, "God I know You've got to do it, but could You just remember mercy?" You want to know something? God always does, doesn't He? Always does. I've said it and I'll keep saying it till the day I drop dead that God always couples two things together, judgment and salvation, judgment and grace, judgment and mercy. It's always there. It's always there.

So he says, "In wrath remember mercy." Now he knows that God's judgment has to come. He knows that wrath is the natural result of sin. God told him that all through Chapter 2. He's got that down pat. He knows that. Just like we studied in Romans 1, he knew that as Paul knew it. He's sure that God can't tolerate sin, Chapter 1, verse 13, that He can't behold evil that He can't look on iniquity. He knows the principle of God's wrath is in operation. He knows that God is going to judge, and so he doesn't ask God, God remember all the good things we've done, God O take account of all the little nice things we've been doing from time to time. He doesn't say God remember their good works. He doesn't say God remember their merits. He says God remember, what, mercy, mercy.

If God remembered their good works He wouldn't have anything to remember. If God remembered their merits He wouldn't have anything to remember and Habakkuk knew that so he just said God remember mercy. He seems to be saying temper Your wrath with mercy. He seems to be saying God we have not one thing to offer, we have not one thing to say on our behalf, we have nothing to commend ourselves except to ask You to act like Yourself and put a little mercy in with Your judgment. That's always the way God operates, always, always, always. The judgment finally did come and for a little insight into how God dealt with that prayer of Habakkuk for mercy look at Malachi

Chapter 3, the last book in the Old Testament.

And Malachi had been describing the terrible judgment that was going to come just like Hosea had. Malachi had been describing the fact that it was going to be coming, that there was no way out, and I want you to see in verse 16 what happened. There was a godly group of people around and they kept hearing all these prophets just blistering the populace all the time with the fact that God was going to judge. And in verse 16, of Malachi 3, are the most interesting statement, it says, "Then they that feared the Lord spoke often one to another." Isn't that interesting. They started getting in little groups to discuss what was going to happen to them. Notice they never talked to God; they just talked to one another. I can see them sort of buzzing around all this judgment what's going to happen to us who are godly.

In verse 16 it says, "And the Lord hearken," the Lord was overhearing their conversation. It's convenient that He does that from time to time because if we had to wait for a direct line to Him He might never get to talked to from some people. "The Lord hearken and heard it and," listen to this, "a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord and that thought upon His name." There you have it. There is the mercy with the wrath. And I love verse 17, it's one of the greatest verses in the Bible, "And God says, 'They shall be,' what, don't you like that? "They shall be mine saith the Lord of hosts, in the day when I make up my jewels, and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him."

Go back to Habakkuk. So Malachi prophesied the same message in God's and Habakkuk asked for mercy with wrath and he got it, 'cause before ever God judged and condemned Israel God picked out a remnant that were faithful and He wrote a book of remembrance. And do you remember that it was that little faithful remnant that 70 years after the Chaldeans had taken Israel into captivity wandered back into that land, rebuilt the temple, and rebuilt the walls? God had His remnant. God always does, He always does. He's always mercy with wrath. And when Habakkuk said, "In wrath remember mercy," he was saying God act like Yourself. What a tremendous petition it is. He saw things from the perspective of God's glory and because of that He could say, "Praise the Lord anyhow." How practical that is.

The trouble is that most of us find ourselves looking at the situation and staring at the problem instead of trying to discover whether there's anything in our souls that has led God to deal with us like that. When you have a problem you might step back and ask yourself, "Now listen I know what kind of a God I have, is there something in my life that is deserving of God's chastisement?" As the Bible says, "Whom the Lord loveth He, what, chastens." You might stop and ask yourself, "Have I been what I ought to be or is God trying to chasten me to whip me back into the shape that He wants me?" Whatever the answer is if I am not what I ought to be God is chastising me. If I am what I ought to be He's not chastising me, He's just using me to work out His plan and I can say, "Praise the Lord anyway," even though it cost me a little bit.

And so this is Habakkuk's petition that whatever has to happen God's going to do His work, but within that work of judgment God will allow some mercy for those that are faithful, which God did. Now I want you to see the second thing about his prayer, not only petition, but remembrance and praise. The second element of his prayer was his remembrance and that's a great section of it, which we'll just note briefly. Verse 3 to 15, and in verse 3 to 15, he remembers God's works and he praises God because of it. One great part of prayer is praise and praise is based on remembering God and what God has done. And that's exactly what Habakkuk does. And he finds consolation in a godly interpretation of history mixed with great crescendos of exalting God.

Now in verse 3 to 15 you have what is called a theophony. This is a vision of God and in his mind he's expanding all the glories of God that are available to him and he paints this sweeping glorious picture of God and he praises God for what God has done. He reminds himself of certain great facts in the long story of Israel's history. He reminds himself of the captivity in Egypt. He reminds himself of the Red Sea. He reminds himself of the wilderness, of the defeat of many nations as the children of Israel possess the land he reminds himself how God led them and led them and brought them to the land that was promised to them. He reminds himself of the faithfulness of God.

You remember back in Chapter 1 that he said, "We will not die." You remember that? In the midst of all of his problems about oh God this whole nations is going down the drain. Are you going to send all this judgment? And then he stops and wait a minute we will not die. Why? 'Cause God made a covenant with Abraham and God's a faithful God. And God's not going to wipe us out. He's got a promise to keep. And here in Chapter 3 he says much the same thing in these verses. He appeals to God's glorious manifestation of Himself in the history of Israel as indicative of the faithfulness of God, which He will know and the people of his day will know.

And verse 3 starts it out. He says, "God came from Teman, and the Holy One from Mount Paran. Selah. His glory covered the heavens and the earth was full of His praise. And here he's talking about God's people at Sinai. These terms are in Deuteronomy 33 in relation to the area of Sinai. And he says God was at the Mount Sinai. And in verse 4 he takes it even further and he describes it this way: His brightness was like the light," and the word light is the word for sunlight. "He had horns coming out of His hand and there was the hiding of His power." Now the brightness of the light he says that when God appeared at Sinai there was the brightness of sunlight.

Now you remember one thing about Moses, I think it's the 34th Chapter of Exodus, it says that Moses came down and what was it about Moses that was so different? His face shone like the sun. I think he just had reflected something of the brilliance of the light of God and here Habakkuk grabs that when he says his brightness was like the sunlight. And then he says something very interesting and yet strange in many ways, he had horns coming out of his hand.

Now what in the world is that? Well I believe those horns are rays of light. I believe that for two reasons. Number one: the word for rays of light, the first rays of light, you know like if you see clouds part and the streaks of light come down, the Hebrew word for rays, those first rays of light and the word for horns are words of the same family. They are kin words, very close. Not only that, but Arab poetry commonly compares these rays of light to the horns of a gazelle, which are straight and kind of wound, and so I think that what it really is, is that these horns are representative of the spitting out of beautiful streams the first rays of light. You say, "What are they coming off of?" Well in Deuteronomy 33:2, what did Moses have in his hands when he came down? Remember? He had the law of God didn't he? Here I believe, as in Deuteronomy 33:2, it says, "At his right hand was a fiery law unto them." I think he had in his hand that spun out brilliance and I think that's what in this great theophany, this vision that Habakkuk is having in his prayer he is seeing the glory of the light that comes out of the hands of the prophet Moses who stands with the law of God.

Then it says in verse 4, "There was the hiding of His power." There it seems to me in that ineffable light was the hiding place of God's majesty. That God was in that light, of course, God is light. That's very simple. And the Psalmist said in Psalm 104:2, he said, "He clothed himself with light as a garment." And that brilliant light that was spinning off the face of Moses and shining off the tables of stone in his hands was the very essence of God. What a beautiful description.

And Habakkuk is glorying in the kind of God that he has. And then in verse 5 he moves to something else. He's talking about Egypt and the plagues and he says, "Before him went the pestilence. He moves on in verse 6 and 7, "He stood and measured the earth, behold drove asunder the nations, the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual mountains did bow, his ways are everlasting. I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction and the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble." And here all He's saying in sweeping terms is God controls history and God has put down nations when God wanted to and Israel has been victorious.

Then in verse 9, "Thy bow was made quite naked." This is a picture of an archer whose bow is right out of the sheath and in those days they carried their bow in some kind of a sheath like a holster would be, like a rifle holster or something, and this means that God has His bow unbarred. Whatever the enemy is God's ready, God is vigilant, God is ready, tremendous picture of God's defense of His people.

Then when you come to verse 10 you see an inference of the Red Sea, "The Mountains saw thee, they trembled, the overflowing of the water passed by, and the deep uttered its voice and lifted its hands on high." And here you have in Hebrew poetry the idea of water piling up, which is exactly what happened when they crossed the Red Sea, the water piled up on both sides. So he's remembering all this history and yet he's just talking about it in glorious terms.

And in verse 11, you have a reference to Joshua 10, "The sun and the moon stood still in their habitation, at the light of thine arrows they went and at the shining of thy glittering spear." Seems to be saying that the sun and moon were literally pale in the light of the gleam that came from God's arrows in defense of Israel. And there's one light in the sky that can pale the light of the sun. I don't know if you've ever seen it. But sometimes when I was in the Midwest I have seen what is commonly called heat lightening and that kind of lightening can absolutely just splatter the sky and it actually outshines the sun for the moment that you see it. And certainly there is a light that is more brilliant than the moon. What's that? It's lightening itself. A bolt of lightening, God's arrows.

And here in a very graphic term he paints the picture of God's glittering judgments blasting out of heaven more brilliant than the moon and more brilliant than the sun, a tremendous description of God in His power.

Then in verse 12 to 14, he just sort of lists the many ways that God has defeated His foes. Thou didst march through the land in indignation, Thou didst thresh the nations in anger, thou wentest forth for the salvation of Thy people, even for salvation with Thine anointed; Thou woundedst the head out of the house of the wicked." In other words took care of the princes, the leaders, "by laying there the foundation unto the neck." He started with the people, which is the foundation, He just kept going away till finally you had destroyed all of them. "Thou didst strike through with his own staves, the head of his villages," that would be the chief person. "They came out like a whirlwind to scatter me, their rejoicing was as if to devour the poor secretly." These people came desiring to destroy Israel and God took care of them. God is the God of history. He defeated many foe.

Well you can see that by the time you get to verse 15 Habakkuk is pretty well convincing that God is some kind of a God. But Habakkuk has got so much faith now restored in God it's no wonder that he can say, "Wow, praise the Lord anyhow. Whatever happens Lord; You're that kind of a God. You protected us this far, all these fantastic things through the history of Israel, You're not about to get this far and let those Chaldeans upset Your plans." He believed God. He had fantastic faith. It wasn't faith, like the little boy said; faith believing in what you know ain't so. It wasn't that at all. It was because he knew the kind of God that God was, first of all, secondly he knew the things that God had done to vindicate his faithfulness, and he concluded that because of those two things that God would continue to be faithful.

And so with verse 15, he says, "Thou didst walk through the sea with Thine horses through the heaps of great waters." As if to say nothing can stop God, not even the sea itself, if God wants to march right through the sea He can do it. He's got a powerful God and not for a minute does he lessen his concept of God. He rather builds it to a tremendous crescendo. And really his opening petition and all that follows, as we shall see in a moment, is based upon this one part of his prayer, his remembrance of God, which sets the foundation for every other dimension of his prayer.

You see he's standing on solid ground again, isn't he? He's standing where he knows. The prophet reminds himself of the facts and the power of God and he assures himself that in these events God was just keeping His word and fulfilling His oath to Abraham that He had again reminded Isaac and Jacob of.

Now we see the key how to praise the Lord anyhow. It's just simple. We just look back and we just start remembering God's continued constant never ending, never hesitating, never stopping faithfulness. And we take it from there. And we can stand face to face with the problem and we can back off of that problem and say now wait a minute, not only is my God good and right and never does anything wrong, and not only does He love me and care for me, and not only is He the kind of a God who is absolutely eternally righteous, but something else about Him, He's also absolutely and eternally faithful. And He has promised to keep that which I have, what, committed unto to Him. That's a New Testament promise for us. And Jesus said, "I will never, what, leave you or forsake you."

And God has proven Himself faithful throughout all the years. God has never proven Himself unfaithful at any time at any place in history at any juncture in human life. God is always faithful and we can stand today and step back from the most gross problem from the most unbelievable perplexity, from the most confusing dilemma and we can say, "I don't understand the problem, but I understand God and God is faithful."

What a tremendous truth. History proved that Habakkuk's remembrance was justified because the Chaldeans were raised up, they came over, they carried Israel away, but they didn't destroy them. Israel came back and the Chaldeans were destroyed. There aren't any of them left today. They were wiped out.

Oh I don't know about you, but I know about me as a Christian I certainly have much to remember. Do you ever when you get into your prayer time do you ever just start reminding God of things? I do that all the time. Do you ever pray and remind Him of Calvary? Do you ever say, "I just thank you for sending Your Son to die on the cross?" Well sure you do. You know what you're doing when you're doing that? You're remembering God how faithful He is. That's a way to cope with problems. Don't worry about the problem. Step back from the problem and get concerned about the God who is and what He means to you.

There's a third element of his prayer in verse 16. This is kind of a funny thing. I like this part because it's so human and I feel such comfort knowing that I'm not the only person whose like this. "When I heard my belly tremble," isn't that vivid? "My lips quivered at the voice, rottenness entered into my bones." Isn't that a description of _____ it's collapsed? "And I trembled in myself that I might rest in the day of trouble." In other words he says, "I knew this day of trouble was coming and I was really shook up that I wasn't going to be too happy when it got here." He said, "I wanted some comfort when

that day came." "When he cometh up unto the people he will invade them with his troops." In other words, I know those Chaldeans are coming down here and they're coming with all those troops. He says, "I know God's a wonderful God, and I know God knows exactly what He's doing, but I'm scared." That's so human. Sure he was scared. He didn't have any philosophical doubts, he didn't have any philosophical questions, they were absolutely all answered, weren't they? He had the answer to all of his dilemmas. The only thing left was fear. He just trembled. He fell apart thinking of what was going to happen.

Now I want you to get it in mind a little bit here. This was no simple little dilemma. He was really facing some fantastic problems and he was honest. He was honest enough to say, "God I trust You, I love You, I believe in You, You're the right God, You'll do everything that's true, just and holy, You never make a mistake, I know all that, but I'm scared." He was afraid. But I want you to recognize the very critical truth that's hidden in this thing. Our Lord one time said about some sleeping disciples at a prayer meeting, do you remember them? "The Spirit is willing, but what, the flesh is weak." Now that is important. He said that there are two parts of a man. That's what He said. And He said the Spirit can be just glorying and the flesh can be just incapacitated. Now you'd better thank God for that distinction. People come to me and they say, "I doubt my salvation, or I don't think I'm really, my relation to God is what it ought to be. I don't know if I'm saved because I have all these problem that I can't solve." Now wait a minute. Those two don't even belong together. The Spirit and the flesh are different things. You might have the lousiest circumstances in the world. You might be rattling all over the place, that doesn't affect one bit your relation to God.

I guess I could illustrate it from the life of the apostle Paul. Paul said in Philipians, "Rejoice always, and what, again I say rejoice," and constantly talking about joy. Rejoice, rejoice, rejoice. You see Paul going around doing that all the time? Romans 9:2 says this: Paul talking, "I have continual sorrow and heaviness of heart." And I say, "Paul, how can you have continual sorrow and heaviness of heart and be rejoicing all the time?" It's a problem, but not really. You know why 'cause the two aren't even related. You know what? Paul had circumstances that brought tears to his eyes. He had circumstances in life that were hard to bear, but you know something, those circumstances on the outside never even touched the inside relationship to God. You see that? You see that important duality?

Don't let your circumstances corrupt your concept of your relation to God. These things bring us problems. Habakkuk was perplexed by his problems. He wasn't at all perplexed in his relation to God. The old story, the Spirit is willing the flesh is weak. This is a convenient dichotomy. I'm glad the Lord made it because now I realize that every time I have a little problem, a little dilemma in my world it doesn't mean that my relationship to God is all haywire.

My relationship to God is the wellspring of my joy and rejoicing down deep inside. It doesn't matter what happens in my world, it doesn't matter what happens in my circumstances, that never affects my

relationship to God, and that's where the joy is. I don't like my circumstances. Sometimes I work hard and I get very tired and I don't like to be very tired. And sometimes I get very tired when I still have a lot of things to do and I get more tired and I don't like that either. And that doesn't touch my relationship to God.

Sometimes there are things in life that are problematic and I don't know the way out and I don't know how to cope with them. That doesn't touch my relationship to God. Habakkuk had a beautiful trust in God. He had an implicit belief in the faithfulness of God. He knew exactly the kind of a God he loved and worshipped. It never was touched by the circumstances, but the circumstances made his teeth chatter.

He understood perfectly what God was doing. He understood God perfectly and yet he trembled. I'll tell you these things come in two different packages many times. You know it was a good thing for him tremble when you think about it. I'll give you Proverbs 9:10 in reverse. "The knowledge of the holy is understanding." And the first of it goes like this: "But the fear of the Lord is what, the beginning of wisdom." The knowledge of the holy is wonderful. It's wonderful to know God, isn't it? That's what Habakkuk, he knew. Wonderful to know, but still in knowing God there's trembling isn't there? The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Reverencing God as he did he knew when that judgment came it was going to be something to see and he was afraid.

You say, "Why was he so afraid, he wasn't going to suffer." Oh? He wasn't going to suffer? You know that he was about to lose his house, his family, his land, his friends, his people and to be carted off into another place. You know that, that fear was upon him? That he was going to stand and watch those that he knew die in front of him? He was going to watch a wholesale slaughter of women and children and men that he knew and walked with every day. Don't tell me he didn't have a lot to lose. No wonder he trembled a little bit. He wasn't an island. He wasn't isolated. He had feelings like anybody else and a massacre that God promised the Chaldeans were going to bring upon Israel would have been very tough to bear. So he confesses his fear.

So we see the first three elements in his prayer: petition, remembrance, and confession, then the last one very quickly. The last element in his prayer was adoration. This is a fitting conclusion. Notice verse 17, and this reminds me of every love song that I've ever heard. You know the old love songs you hear Until the 12th of Never I'll still be Loving You, When the rivers swim upstream and everything is all fouled up I'll still be loving you and on and on. Well you know in a great measure that's exactly what Habakkuk's talking about in these three verse. Listen to what he said. This is the same thing. He says, "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, see, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labor of the olive shall fail and the field shall yield no food, the flock shall be cut off from the fold, there shall be no herd in the stalls, and you just hear that, that's one of the greatest love songs I've ever heard, and that's exactly what it is. Can't you hear it here? The Lord, He is saying in verse 18, "Yet will I rejoice in the Lord. I will joy in the God of my salvation." Isn't that fantastic?

He says God I don't care if all of nature goes crazy. I don't care if nothing's right in the whole world, I'm going to love You and rejoice in You and translated that's praise the Lord anyhow. I've learned to stand back from my circumstances and just get blessed about the God that I know. What an exciting truth.

Then he says in verse 19, "The Lord God is my strength and He will make my feet like hinds feet," and hinds are gazelles and it's the idea that God's going to give me speed to run away from anybody who would want to hurt me. Speed and He'll make me walk upon mine high places. God's going to put me up in a lofty place. O what a picture of adoration.

You say, well this is a tremendous lesson here, yes there is. What can a person do in a state of human weakness? What can you do when you're faced with all these horrible problems? Which way can you look to get out of them? What was there to sustain him when he had all these things, his home was going, his friends, his family, what could he do? Somebody said he could run down and make an appointment at the Hebrew counseling clinic. Well that's possible. Or else he could pull a great cop out and he could just say oh well I'm not going to cry over spilt milk. But he couldn't do that because he was too emotionally involved. Or he could say to himself, now come on Habakkuk, pull yourself together. He couldn't do that either. I'll tell you if he could have done any of those he probably would have the state that he was in. But he can't do any of them because none of them have the answer so he just drops the idea and just says I'm going to stand here and love God and just keep on loving Him and praising Him no matter what happens.

I'm always reminded when I see something like this of Job who said, "Though He slay me, what, yet will I trust Him." Don't you like that? It's the same thing and the Christian can do no less. When all hell breaks loose in your world, when the worst comes to the worst, when everything is lost, step back from your problem, remember your God and start to rejoice with a holy joy based on love and adoration that nothing will ever touch. That you're His and He's yours and He cares for you and nothing will ever affect that in any way. Oh the sweet love of this particular passage, the sweetness of the spirit of Habakkuk. His problems were solved, not because he understood everything, but because he knew his God and he put his trust in Him. And he could say I don't care what happens yet will I rejoice in the Lord. I will joy in the God of my salvation. His circumstances caused him to shake, but his relationship to God was absolutely unshakeable. Let's pray.

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