

Habakkuk 3:3-20
(John 16:20-24, 33; James 1:2)
“Yet I Will Rejoice in the Lord”

Introduction

Habakkuk is a message to us in the hard places of life, times when we are upset with the silence of God in the face of trouble and injustice, and then when we are even more upset with God’s answer to our cry. We have followed Habakkuk on his journey from fear to faith. But even in a posture of complete and submissive trust in the Lord, the prophet confesses to his terror in the face of what is coming. As he records the vision, he says, “I hear, and my body trembles; my lips quiver at the sound... my legs tremble beneath me” (3:16a). Thank God for the prophet’s honesty! We are tempted to think that to be a person of faith is to be fearless. We tend to think that if we really trust the Lord, if our faith is strong enough, we will never tremble with fear in times of trouble. But that is not true, as the Kings of Israel, the psalmists and prophets, not to mention the Lord Jesus himself and his apostles all attest.

We see, in this final prayer song, the prophet move from fear and trembling to singing and rejoicing in the Lord. *That, in fact, is the great lesson of this final chapter: that the Bible’s antidote to anxiety and fear is neither resigning yourself stoically to whatever comes, nor somehow working up the courage to face whatever comes, but rather rejoicing in the face of whatever comes.* It is learning to rejoice, learning to look forward to what God will do with the relatively small messes we find ourselves in and the enormous messes the world finds itself in. But how do we get there? This morning, I invite you to look with me one more time at the movement in this prophet’s experience that carried him from fear to faith, a faith that sang with joy in the face of what had previously troubled and even terrified him.

Body

- 1. First, we must be in honest conversation with the living God – not merely talking *about* him, but talking *to* him.**
- 2. Second, we must be willing to be quiet, to learn to listen for his voice, to watch how his works unfold in our lives and in human history.**
- 3. Third, we must learn that as long as our focus is on ourselves and our problems, as long as we are merely living for ourselves, we will not understand the times in which we live, or the meaning of our lives.**
- 4. Fourth, we must study God’s acts in the past – his judgment on the nations and his salvation of his people – in order to know what to expect God to do in the future.**
- 5. Finally, we must study his promises to us in the light of all that he has done in the past to redeem his people from trouble.**

Conclusion

Then, we start to get excited, we start to anticipate, to expect great things of our great God. We begin to sing with joy, even in the face of disaster. As long as our joy and confidence depend upon the presence circumstances of life – the state of the nation, the health of the economy, our success at work, or in marriage – our joy, our peace, our sense of meaning, are tied to the latest headlines.

Only when we get our eyes off of our circumstances and on to the Lord, only when we bow the knee to him and confess that his ways are right and just, only when we wait upon him with expectation that he who redeemed his people in trouble will do so again for us, only then will we say:

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, 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 deer's; he makes me tread on my high places (3:17-19).

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