

# Habakkuk

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 06 May 1984

Preacher: Crowter, David (1931-2000)

[ 0 : 00 ] I will speak from the words found in the 17th and 18th verses in the third chapter of Habakkuk.

The book of the prophet Habakkuk, chapter 3 and verses 17 and 18. Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines.

The labour of the olives shall fail, and the field shall yield no meat. The flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls.

Yet I will rejoice in the Lord. I will joy in the God of my salvation. Many difficulties are bound to meet us in life.

There are sure to be, in the pathway of every one of us, numbers of perplexities and trials and troubles.

[ 1 : 10 ] Since sin entered the world, it has always been so. We cannot possibly escape the many difficulties that are sure to arise even daily.

There is no doubt about that. The question is, what effect do these difficulties have upon us?

Do they shake us completely? Or can we triumph over them? Very often the effect of these difficulties is that many doubts arise.

Things do not seem to be as we might expect them to be. They do not even seem to be as the word of God declares them to be.

It may seem impossible for us to reconcile in our minds the events that happen with the truth recorded in the word of God.

[ 2 : 20 ] And so, faith may soon waver, and doubts may enter in, as clearly was the case in the heart of the prophet Habakkuk.

He could not see how these things could be reconciled. But as we mentioned this morning, he took these matters before the Lord. And one by one, they were resolved.

So that in this concluding chapter, he really rises above all these things. He has a fresh view of the majesty and power of God.

And he concludes with this expression of triumphant faith, which is almost unique, even in the leaves of scripture, in its confidence and strength and calmness.

You see, dear friends, in the troubles that we meet, and in the doubts that we have, or may have, there is really one solution.

[ 3 : 35 ] There is one foundation for this faith. The Lord had declared in the end of the previous chapter, that in spite of all those things that were to take place, first the captivity of his own nation, and then the destruction of the destroying Babylonians, but the Lord is in his holy temple.

Let the earth keep silence before him. What a tremendous word that is. As we have it expressed in the Revelation, it is the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne.

It is he who is controlling all these things. Thus there is this one vital principle and antidote for these difficulties and for these perplexities and doubts.

It is this principle of faith to believe that the Lord is in his holy temple, and that our place is in that way to keep silence before him, to submit to his authority, and to realize that whatever happens, the promise of God in his beloved Son, is sure to hold fast.

Nothing is going to change these eternal principles of God's truth. Habakkuk had found the rock, and that was why he was so secure and so calm.

[ 5 : 21 ] He could face the future now with entire confidence. Whatever happened, his joy was not going to fail. Maybe that that seems a very high standard, and so it is.

But how precious is that faith which honors God in this way? And it is not only that of Habakkuk. We find words like these expressed elsewhere.

In one of these psalms, we read of that righteous man who is thus described, that he is not shaken by evil tidings.

He is not disturbed by them. His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord. He has found the one eternal rock, and he is not going to be moved from it.

And therefore, whatever evil tidings arise, do not really affect him. We find in the prophet, that man described in the prophet Isaiah.

[ 6 : 37 ] Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the Lord forever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.

We find it in the prophet Jeremiah. Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, whose hope the Lord is.

And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of waters. We find it in the case, the experience of the apostle Paul.

There he was on the boat in the middle of the storm. For fourteen days, I think, they had not seen the sun nor star. And as far as the rest of the company were concerned, all hope of being saved had been lost.

And then he stood forth, and declared to them what the Lord had said to him. How that they would all be saved from the ocean.

[ 7 : 51 ] And he says, I believe God. That it shall be. Even as he has spoken. The storm raged on. But that did not shake the apostle's faith.

You see him in the prison at Rome. And he says, I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.

whether he had nothing or much was a very minor significance. He always had the Lord himself.

He always had his presence and his strength. And so he had really become independent of circumstances. what happened all around did not shake his faith.

He was established upon the rock. Now, how desirable it is to enter into this experience.

[ 8 : 52 ] those words in the verse have been on my mind. May the Lord grant us the comfort of them.

Where the poet says, Be still, my soul, thy God doth undertake to guide the future as he has the past.

Thy hope, thy confidence, let nothing shake. All that now mysterious shall be bright at last. Be still, my soul, the winds and waves still know his voice who ruled them while he dwelt below.

But in this word we have quite clearly the unfavorable circumstances that the apostle, the prophet, anticipated, the unforting faith which he could testify and the unfailing joy which was the result of such faith.

Though may the Lord bring us into the same faith and joy. First then there are the unfavorable circumstances that he expected.

[ 10 : 17 ] The Lord had prophesied to him, had shown that the Chaldeans were going to overrun the land. And so these circumstances were very likely to arrive.

Now the Jewish nation and others in those times did not rely very much on imports. They grew almost all their own food.

And therefore it was their own lands which they looked to before the supply of their essential meals. And here the prophet is looking at this situation when all these sources are likely to dry up.

the fruit trees should not blossom or produce. The fields of corn should produce no food either because of the invading armies that were expected.

Neither the flocks of the sheep nor of the herds of the cattle were going to provide any meats. They were gone. Now what does one do? What would you do?

[ 11 : 33 ] If all your food supplies were cut off? In such times faith is really at a premium. In such a test as this that which is real is proved very plainly to be so.

And that which is not just disappears altogether. But you see dear friends we cannot really escape the issue.

We may not face a grievous famine at the moment. But we surely all of us have to face eventually the prospect of losing everything.

Everything in this life. However long we may be favoured to retain those things that we at present enjoy.

it cannot always be so in the very nature of things. At death if not before we have got to part with everything here below. Now what will you have then?

[ 12 : 49 ] What a mercy it is to be rich in faith. To be a possessor of that faith which means that faith in the Lord Jesus which means that we possess eternal life which we cannot ever possibly lose.

But how tragic to be found at the end destitute of any such faith of any such life.

Now dear friends we have got to part with everything here below. we brought nothing into this world and it is certain that we can carry nothing out.

How important it is then to possess this vital living faith in the Saviour to be established upon this rock which cannot be shaken.

the Saviour himself spoke of that religion that trust in him which was like a man building his house upon a rock and the wind came the floods descended the winds blew the floods came the rain descended and beat upon that house but it fell not for it was founded upon a rock.

[ 14 : 19 ] Now dear friends are you founded upon this rock? Is your hope built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness?

Everything else of a lesser nature is going to go. Unfavourable circumstances sooner or later we must meet what a mercy it is if we know how to face them.

And secondly there is this unfailing and forging faith that is so necessary in such circumstances as these.

As you know that faith of which the prophet has spoken that the just shall live by faith is that principle that grace which believes what God has spoken and trusts in him on that account and especially what God has spoken in his dear son.

Now all the people of God have that principle of faith. All who are justified do live by faith to some extent. But the degree of faith varies very greatly.

[ 15 : 51 ] And often when that faith is tested as in these very unfavourable circumstances it may seem to fail and fought very badly.

Often it has been the case. You see the apostles of Jesus how when the storm arose their faith seemed to wither away.

They panicked. Jesus when he had rebuked the winds and the waves he said to them where is your faith?

O ye of little faith wherefore didst thou doubt? They had that faith but it wasn't at all evident when they acted in that way.

It wasn't really in any kind of exercise. It appeared to have gone. the amount of faith that we really have is shown when that faith is really tested.

[ 17 : 09 ] And therefore it is bound to be sooner or later in the such ways as these. But how desirable is a faith like this?

a faith which can look at these possibilities. Possible circumstances which shall be most unfavorable and unwelcome when we may lose almost everything that we value and yet still remain there.

As the hymn puts it though waves and storms flow o'er my hand. Though joys be withered all and dead though strength and health and friends be gone though joys be withered all and dead and every comfort be withdrawn steadfast on this my soul relies redeeming mercy never dies and if you have that you can afford to lose everything else.

It doesn't matter how little you are left with in this life if you have such a hope in the redeeming mercy of God if you can rejoice in the God of your salvation else.

We see this faith and exercise in the word of God we see those wonderful characters who stood fast when the circumstances were so much against them we see how Abraham looked at the impossible and still believed that he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief but was strong in faith giving glory to God being fully persuaded that what he had promised he was able to perform to all human view of it it was quite impossible that he should have a son when he was a hundred years old but God had promised and he believed it and when years went past he still believed it how we need a faith like that oh for a faith that will not shrink when pressed with many a blow that does not falter on the brink of poverty or woe a faith that shines more bright and clear when tempests rage without that when in danger knows no fear in darkness feels no doubt this may seem to be a very rare standard of faith but this is that to which Habakkuk obtained and he came through it in that way he had had his difficulties his perplexities and his doubts he had faced them he had carried them before the Lord and now his faith was steadfast it was steady it was unforgiving he had found the rock of his hope now how very precious this is and faith is the gift of God and increasing faith is still his gift and if we face a word like this and seem to come far short of it there is still the occasion to seek the Lord most earnestly that our faith may be like this that it may be increased that it may be strong in the greatest difficulties and trials when everything seems ready to overwhelm it now how honouring to God is that faith which trusts him in the face of all this opposition and all apparent contradictions the faith that believes God against all circumstances well this faith leads to this triumphant joy so that the prophet says whatever these things be whatever is going to happen yet

[ 21 : 56 ] I will rejoice in the Lord I will joy in the God of my salvation now this joy is the effect of faith that is very plain it is because he believed that he rejoiced and if you really want to rejoice then you will also have to come this way you cannot expect to rejoice unless you believe because joy is the fruit of faith which is the root we see this plainly declared in the scripture that first chapter of the first epistle of Peter he there says wherein ye greatly rejoice in this hope of eternal life though now for a season ye be in heaviness through manifold temptations that the trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth though it be tried with fire might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus

Christ they had real faith which was standing the effect the test of the fire and therefore they greatly rejoiced later on if we have it again whom is the Lord Jesus the Savior whom having not seen ye love in whom though now ye see him not yet believing ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory they could not possibly have rejoiced with unspeakable joy unless they had believed you see the truth of these matters is that doubt and fear and unbelief always lead to misery and dejection and confusion it is this true and living faith which always leads to joy and peace and calm and so the apostle writes to the

Romans in that way the Lord the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing that ye may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Ghost they could not possibly be filled with joy and peace without believing it is always the effect of this faith and I do emphasize this my dear friends because I so often meet with this so many seem to think that if they only had better feelings then they could rejoice they would be better their spiritual state would be so much improved if they could only feel something but the truth really is if they could but look to the Saviour in faith then those feelings would follow then they would rejoice afterward it is really no use basing our hopes and our confidence on our ever changing feelings it is faith in an unchangeable

God that leads to this joy surely that is very plain in this passage now clearly also the center of this joy is God himself and that is a very simple statement and yet it is one that we so need to remember I suppose probably almost every one of us at times is looking for joy where we are never going to find it we so hope to find the causes of joy from within ourselves or from our circumstances or from those things which cannot really profit us we are disappointed because we do not find it there but the word of God constantly directs us to this if we rejoice in the

Lord then we have an unchanging center for our joy the apostle says in the Romans we also not only so but we joy in God by whom also we have received the atonement or the reconciliation having received that reconciliation through the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus he says we joy in God and that meant a continual rejoicing he says we rejoice in hope of the glory of God when our joy is really centered in God and fixed there then we shall be able to say what Habakkuk could that whatever happens we can still rejoice because

[ 27 : 32 ] God himself will never change and his character is such as to afford every believer the utmost joy the meek shall increase their joy in the Lord rejoice in the Lord always and again I say rejoice rejoice in the Lord he upright and he righteous and shout for joy all ye that are upright in heart all the way through the scriptures we are taught that the only joy which can really satisfy and which is really going to remain is that joy which is God centered and so the reason for this joy is the work of the

Lord Jesus Christ Habakkuk says I will joy in the God of my salvation the God who was to deliver him out of all his troubles doubt of all the distress and guilt of sin regard of my salvation and so we are led especially to the Saviour and when Paul writes so continually about that it is the Lord Jesus he especially means when he says we are they who worship God in the Spirit and rejoice in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh there was his joy centering in the Saviour and all that he had done for him this joy results from a sense of pardoned sin and peace with God through our

Lord Jesus Christ it is after that that Paul says we rejoice in hope of the glory of God now do you rejoice in this way it is your joy of this nature that it does so fix in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ for he is the same yesterday and today and forever if you rejoice in him today there will be the very same cause for rejoicing tomorrow and every other day throughout eternity this was the secret that Habakkuk had found the effect of this joy is elevation it lifts you above the troubles and trials of this life and the prophet expresses this in this poetical way in the next verse when he says the

Lord God is my strength and he will make my feet like hinds feet and he will make me to walk upon mine high places such a joy really elevates you above the troubles and difficulties of this world in a sense you walk amid the clouds it is in this figure that you are like a hind most of the animals of course cannot ascend up onto the crags and heights of the mountains but these hinds can easily scale those peaks they can rise far above the level of ordinary creatures and so the prophet says that the Lord will make him to ride above these ordinary places he will be elevated above the reach of the distressing trials of this present life and he will thus there rejoice in the

Lord this is then a very elevating joy the joy that is as strong as this means that you can really ride over the troubles of this present world world well here it is said before us in this very beautiful way in the word of God Habakkuk having come through a very trying and distressing experience having his faith sorely tested and then increased and having the Lord so graciously reveal himself to the prophet in answer to his prayers he says in effect now whatever else goes whatever I know however difficult and gloomy the situation is yet I will rejoice in the Lord I will joy in the God of my salvation can you honestly say that probably not and surely most if not all of us really have a confession to make that we do come far short of this very high and wonderful standard but that is no reason why we should be content to come short of it if that is the case the trouble is simply our own unbelief it is not that God has changed or his word is any less secure it is because we do not really believe it when troubles rise our faith wavers we so need the Lord to subdue that terrible pearl of unbelief and to raise up in us this mighty faith that is so honoring to him in which can so triumph over adversities there you can see it in the people of God in his word and also in the accounts in the lives of the Lord's people since then they have been able in a wonderful way to rise above their troubles and this also means it does give cause for confidence in this wonderful

[ 34 : 27 ] God the Lord God is my strength can you say that do you rejoice in the Lord in any measure now he is worthy of our utmost confidence we may be sure that when the prophet came to this faith it was altogether justified that he had never any occasion to regret having been so bold as to express himself in this way the Lord shall be thy confidence says the wise man and shall keep thy foot from being taken as long as he is our confidence we shall be safe if we put all our confidence in him we may be sure we shall not forter or fail his word in the wonderful account that we have of him gives the ground before the surest confidence in him as we read in this chapter his works his ways his unchanging works they are really quite sufficient ground for our confidence it is so sad that unbelief should so rob us of this joy may the

Lord so strengthen our faith that it may live in water and flame that it may last when difficulties oppose us and when everything may seem to go wrong that we too might be able to say yes I will rejoice in the Lord I will joy in the God of my salvation amen hymn number 96 tune St.

Chrysostom 1002 hymn number 96 now I have found a ground wherein my anchor hope shall firm remain the wounds the wounds of Jesus for my sin before the world's foundation slain whose mercy shall unshaken stay when heaven and earth are fled away oh grace thou bottomless abyss my sins are swallowed up in thee covered is my unrighteousness and condemnation I am free for Jesus blood through earth and skies mercy eternal mercy cries hymn 96 now I have found the ground wherein my anchor hope shall firm remain■■■ the hopes of hope tiene

DOWN low li tenth whose Shall unshaken stay When heaven and earth are fled away O  
grace the bottomless abyss My sins have swallowed up in thee Covered by and by the  
flesh From home and nation I am free

For Jesus' love, the hotline skies Mercy, eternal, mercy Christ Jesus, I know that's the light  
for me It is my hope, my joy, my rest Hear the crown of the stars I see, I look into my  
Savior's rest

[ 40 : 33 ] Awake, sad love, and anxious dear Mercy and love are beaten now Those waves and  
stars Go on my head Those strength and doubt That breath's become The loudrongous  
and stars Will appear Though my hope

And with pink■ Those ahem Be withdrawn With hope Steadfast on this My soul relies  
Redeeming mercy Never dies Fixed on this Ground will I remain Though my heart's Faire  
and flesh decay This I shall

My soul sustain Where the health foundation Left the grave Merciful power I then shall  
prove Love with an everlasting love Most gracious And faithful God Do thank thee for thy  
Precious word of truth

Do forgive We pray thee The greatness of our unbelief Their doubts And fears Oh do help  
us To trust thee With an unwavering faith Do bless the word To our souls Grant that there  
may be A savour in it Which shall remain A sweet savour Saviour of Christ And of thy  
mercy Through his blood May the grace Of the Lord Jesus The love Of the Father The  
communion Of the Holy Spirit Abide with us all Amen Amen Preacher come