I will be joyful in God my Saviour

Habakkuk 3:1-19

Key Verse: 18-19 yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior. The Sovereign Lord is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to go on the heights.

In chapters 1 and 2, Habakkuk asked God two troubling questions. First, How long, O Lord, must I call for help, but you do not listen? Or cry out to you, Violence! but you do not save? Why do you make me look at injustice? Why do you tolerate wrongdoing? God answered Habakkuk with his utterly amazing plan. It was raising the Babylonians to judge the people of Judah. This led to Habakkuk’s second question: Why then do you tolerate the treacherous? Why are you silent while the wicked swallow up those more righteous than themselves? God told him a revelation concerning the end. It spoke of the end of Judah and Babylon, the wicked and the righteous, and the kingdom of this world. It also revealed the kingdom of God. We learned that the righteous must live by their faith.

Now chapter 3 is Habakkuk's response to this revelation. It is known as one of the most beautiful prayer songs in the Bible. His prayer songs express his decisive confession of faith and his hope and joy despite the tough times and difficult circumstances of God's impending judgment upon Judah. In today's passage, we may learn what we need to pray for, what attitude we can take to overcome difficult times, and where our joy and strength come from.

Part I. Habakkuk’s Prayer (1-15).

Look at verse 1. A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet. On shigionoth. Look at verse 19b says, For the director of music. On my stringed instruments. Scholars do not know what Shigionoth means, but they say it is likely a song type with rapid changes in rhythm. The prophet Habakkuk responds to God with a prayer song in his emotional change. Look at verse 2. Lord, I have heard of your fame; I stand in awe of your deeds, O Lord. Renew them in our day, in our time make them known; in wrath remember mercy. It is translated in KJV, O LORD, I have 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; in wrath remember mercy. This is Habakkuk’s prayers. Here 'your fame(speech)' and 'your deeds' refer to what God has revealed in chapter 2. Hearing these, he stands in awe and reverently fears the God of justice. He no longer complains but accepts God's irreversible plan even though it tells about God’s judgment upon Judah. And he prays to God.

Here we can see the change in Habakkuk's heart and perspective. His eyes looked at violence and injustice of Judah that caused frustration and despair, and poured out his complaints to God. He doubted God’s justice and salvation. But God's words changed his heart, opened his eyes to see the world and beyond from God's perspective, and made him acknowledge the Sovereign God and his incredible revelation. Indeed, The Word of God changes our view and makes us know the wisdom of salvation in Christ Jesus. I pray that we may humbly receive and crave God's words.

What does Habakkuk pray for? Look at verse 2b. O Lord. Renew them in our day, in our time make them known; in wrath remember mercy. (in KJV, O LORD, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy.)

First, Renew them in our day. (KJV: revive thy work in the midst of the years.) Here, 'renew' or 'revive your work' means to let your people humbly repent of their sins and return to God again, and let God become their God and they become your people. However, this can only be possible through the process of God's judgment and distressing refinement that will come upon Judah.

Habakkuk prays that this God's work will be done in the midst of the years.

Second, in our time make them known. (KJV: in the midst of the years make known.) Habakkuk prays that God's work may be made known to His people. Although God's judgment comes upon them because of their sins, they must have faith in God who wants to save them. Only then can they repent and turn to God. Even in times of distress, they must believe in God's unfailing love so that they can endure it and live by faith to the end. He also wants the glory of God to be known not only to his people but to all the earth.

Third, in wrath remember mercy. Habakkuk earnestly intercedes for God to remember his mercy in his wrath. Without God's mercy, no one can be saved in his wrath. Through the prayer of the prophet Habakkuk, we learn what we really need to ask for. Habakkuk does not pray to God to revoke his wrath or reduce his punishment. He does not pray for his own safety or Israel's security, wealth, or glory. He simply prays that O LORD, in wrath remember mercy. Why? it is because he knew their problem is nothing but sin problem with God where all problems starts. They were chosen people with blessings, but they left God and turned to idols of the world. In the time of trouble what they need is not political, economic or military power, but they need simply God’s mercy, God’s forgiveness of sins, the restoration of relationship with God. When they humble themselves and repent of their sins, God will cease his wrath upon them and will bless them and make them purified again as God's pure virgin bride, and they will become priestly kingdoms and holy nations to the world.

Indeed, God showed his mercy through his Son Christ Jesus. He died for us and rose from the dead. He even now intercedes for us with his mercy because he purchased us by his precious blood. He wants us to be with him now and forever in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

There are some many problems in the world. What we need to pray for is God’s mercy. O LORD, have mercy on each one of us! Have mercy on this city. Have mercy on this country. We absolutely need God's mercy. The influence of sin of this world is stronger than ever; meanwhile, the children of God are weakened and secularized by worldly lust, pleasure, and pride. Rather than waiting for Christ's coming, they are drunk with the sins of the world, and he hardly wakes up even though God's wrath is imminent.

As I prepare today's message, I discover myself like Judah. I repent of my sin of wasting God’s grace and blessings. My heart and eyes are easily tempted by the world's pleasure and lust. I pray for God's mercy. I pray that I may preach the gospel of Christ to those who are dying in sin. I pray that I may be a servant of faithfulness and devotion to the work of God.

In verses 3-15, Habakkuk remembered God’s glory and his great deliverance in his mercy. Let’s look at verse 3. 3 God came from Teman, the Holy One from Mount Paran. Selah His glory covered the heavens, and his praise filled the earth. Teman is known as one of the cities in Edom. Mount Paran was located in the Sinai Peninsula. God came down to make a covenant with the people of Israel and where the glory of God was revealed. His glory covered the heavens, and his praise filled the earth. Look at verse 4. 4 His splendor was like the sunrise; rays flashed from his hand, where his power was hidden. His splendor was like the light of the sun shining in its full strength. In his hand comes out his power, which was hidden. Look at verse 5. 5 Plague went before him; pestilence followed his steps. Plague and pestilence symbolize God’s judgment against the enemies that stand in his way.

Look at verses 6-7. 6 He stood, and shook the earth; he looked, and made the nations tremble. The ancient mountains crumbled, and the age-old hills collapsed. His ways are eternal. 7 I saw the tents of Cushan in distress, the dwellings of Midian in anguish..” No power in the world can oppose or stop him, but all the nations tremble before Him. All the idols against Him crumble and collapse. Indeed, God executed his judgment in Egypt for the deliverance of Israel. All the kings and the fortified cities fell and were annihilated before him.

God’s glory and his splendor and his dreadful judgment will come again as Christ Jesus comes again. No one dares to stand before Him, and no one can withstand His judgment.

In verses 8-15, Habakkuk remembers how God delivered and led Israel to the Promised land. Look at verses 8-10. 8 Were you angry with the rivers, O Lord? Was your wrath against the streams? Did you rage against the sea when you rode with your horses and your victorious chariots? 9 You uncovered your bow, you called for many arrows. Selah You split the earth with rivers; 10 the mountains saw you and writhed. Torrents of water swept by; the deep roared and lifted its waves on high. Here, rivers, streams, and sea refer to the Nile, Jordan river, and the Red Sea. God judged the enemies and saved His people. When the mountains saw the Lord, they trembled, and the river turned to blood. The Jodan river piled up as they crossed, the sea roared, and the waves were raised like walls. All nature and all things were afraid before God and obeyed. Look at verses 11-12. 11 Sun and moon stood still in the heavens at the glint of your flying arrows, at the lightning of your flashing spear. 12 In wrath you strode through the earth and in anger you threshed the nations. This verse describes the sun and moon stopped when Joshua conquered the Amorites. The Lord sent his wrath, struck the earth, and threshed the nations with his feet.

Let’s look at verses 13-15. 13 You came out to deliver your people, to save your anointed one. You crushed the leader of the land of wickedness, you stripped him from head to foot. Selah. 14 With his own spear you pierced his head when his warriors stormed out to scatter us, gloating as though about to devour the wretched who were in hiding. 15 You trampled the sea with your horses, churning the great waters. Although the enemies come swiftly like a storm, trying to scatter and devour God's people, God even then pierced the heads of the enemies with their spears. He made his enemies pierce each other with their spears. The Lord rode on horseback and trampled the great waters. Just as God had shown his mercy on Israel, Habakkuk prays that God may not forget His mercy on His people. He prays that his people may repent of their injustice and the sins of idolatry, and they may turn completely to God. May the glory of God be restored among them again.

Part II. Habakkuk’s Joy and Strength (16-19).

Look at verse 16. 16I heard and my heart pounded, my lips quivered at the sound; decay crept into my bones, and my legs trembled. Yet I will wait patiently for the day of calamity to come on the nation invading us. In KJV it says, When I heard, my belly trembled; my lips quivered at the voice: rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble: when he cometh up unto the people, he will invade them with his troops. Verse 16 speaks of the prophet's distress over the coming Babylonian invasion. His pain is like the belly trembling, the lips quivering, and the bones rotting. It is an intolerable pain for the cruel and ferocious Babylonian army to destroy his people. However, Habakkuk determined to wait for the day of trouble. This is because the trouble is not the end, but the beginning of a renewal and revival in God. This is because the day of restoration and salvation will come after going through severe pain. Habakkuk resolved to face this day of trouble and confessed his faith to God.

This leads us to the climax of Habakkuk’s faith in verses 17-19. Look at verse 17. 17 Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls. When Babylon invades soon, Judah will be devastated. The fruits of figs, grapes, and olives and food, sheep, and cattle are symbols of God's blessing and are essential to life. But they will all be plundered. It will be the day of great distress for them. At this time, it is easy to grumble and oppose God, and grieve with unbelief and despair. But what will Habakkuk do? Look at verse 18. 18 yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior. Despite the painful reality of being devastated by invasion and everything being plundered and nothing left, he will not blame God or his people, but instead decide to rejoice in the Lord. Despite times being tough and circumstances being difficult, Habakkuk declares that he will be "joyful in God his Saviour." How can he be joyful? This is because he believes in God's salvation. He believes that God will save not only himself but also all the righteous who live by faith in God as their Saviour. He will rejoice because God's work will be accomplished, and God's glory will be restored. Habakkuk found hope and peace and joy in God. When we believe in God as our Sovereign Lord and Saviour, all our worries, fears, despair, and sorrows will disappear and we will find peace and joy in Him. We no longer need to be bound by no matter what circumstances we are in 17 Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls. 18 yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior.

Look at verse 19. 19The Sovereign Lord is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to go on the heights. For the director of music. On my stringed instruments. The prophet Habakkuk confesses that God is my strength. It is God who strengthens him to endure all hardships. He confesses that God makes his feet like the feet of a deer. The deer's feet are fast and strong, they can easily climb and run around high mountains. Habakkuk believes that God makes his feet as strong as a deer's so that he can overcome the time of trouble that is to come. God also allows him to see God's vision with joy and hope as he walks on high. The Sovereign LORD is our source of joy and strength. We praise God who is our Lord and Saviour.

In conclusion, God gives us true prayer topics and teaches us how to retain heavenly joy and strength. He is our Lord and Saviour who is our true joy and our strength even in times of trouble. We pray that our faith may be renewed and revived and we may gain joy and strength in God our saviour so that we can serve his works to the end.