

# Rejoicing in God Despite Our Circumstances

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Father, this morning, many of us come to you in weakness. We come in confusion, in pain, some of us with heartache. God, so many of us can resonate with the words of Habakkuk when he cried out, How long, oh God, is this going to last?

And yet, God, we come to you. We come to the great deliverer, the healer, the restorer of souls. Father, this morning, many of us carry great grief in our hearts.

Many of us carry old wounds and we carry with us the brokenness of this world. This morning, we come to you because while you never promised to take all our problems away, you do promise to be with us, to carry us, to comfort us and to strengthen us.

And so, God, we come to you this morning. We don't just come to religion. We don't just come to an organization. We come to you and we look for our hope in you. We look for you to build our faith even in the midst of the storms of life.

Father, this morning, won't you open our eyes to see you. Give us a vision of your greatness and your glory, we pray. Father, this morning, we want to thank you for the innumerable times you have carried us without us even knowing about it.

[ 1 : 1 2 ] How your invisible grace has seen us through difficulties. How you've preserved our life and our faith. Which has, your hand has stopped calamity and disaster coming our way.

You have upheld us when calamity has come our way. And God, so often we haven't even been aware of the times you've done it. And for that, we thank you this morning. Father, this morning, we also want to thank you for your provision in our lives.

For our financial resources. For the blessings you've given us. For our families and friends. For homes and for the ability to send kids to school. For many of us to enjoy even some of the luxuries in life.

Father, we ask you to so shape our hearts that these things don't entrap us and ensnare us. God, we confess that often we do look to our circumstances or our material blessings around us for joy. For our comfort and for our hope. Forgive us, we pray. Open the eyes of our hearts to see that our joy is found in you. Not in our circumstances. God, in your sovereign goodness and not in our material blessings.

[ 2 : 1 6 ] Father, thank you for the offering that has been brought this morning. Give us wisdom how to steward it. We pray that it will be used to the praise and the glory of your name, God.

Father, this morning, we also want to pray for every church in Hong Kong. For every church which loves your gospel and preaches your word. We pray for every church what we pray for ourselves. That they, like us, God, we will become more like you. That, God, you will give us your Holy Spirit. That we will walk with you. Father, we pray that the gospel will get deep into our hearts.

That we will be rooted and secure in who you are. Knowing that our identity and our hope and our life is found in you. God, we ask for favor in our evangelistic efforts.

Help us, God, to share the gospel with our neighbors, with our colleagues, with our families and friends. With clarity and wisdom, making the most of every opportunity. God, we pray that the church of Hong Kong really will become evangelistically strong, God.

[ 3 : 1 6 ] We pray that your gospel will go out across our city. That people will come to know you by the hundreds and the thousands, God. God, we pray for our city, Lord. We want to ask God for a dramatic move of the gospel.

For revival to come to our city. Lord, this city doesn't just need politicians and more economic growth or affordable housing or less pressure in our schools. God, we need you.

We need you to rest our hearts and to bring the only true source of lasting hope. We need your Holy Spirit to move and open our eyes and to give us faith and to change our hearts and to forgive our

sins.

And to make us more like your son, Jesus Christ. And so, God, we pray for our great city. We pray for ourselves. Come, Lord Jesus, come. In your powerful and glorious name we pray.

Amen. Amen. Let's listen to the scripture reading this morning. Thank you, Justin. Justin, number two. The scripture reading comes from Habakkuk, chapter three.

[ 4 : 22 ] Please follow along in your bulletins or on the screen. A prayer of Habakkuk, the prophet, according to Shigianoth. O Lord, I have heard the report of you.

And your work, O Lord, do I fear. In the midst of the years, revive it. In the midst of the years, make it known. In wrath, remember mercy.

God came from Taman and the Holy One from Mount Paran. His splendor covered the heavens and the earth was full of his praise. His brightness was like the light.

Rays flashed from his hand. And there he veiled his power. Before him went pestilence. And plague followed at his heels.

He stood and measured the earth. He looked and shook the nations. Then the eternal mountains were scattered. The everlasting hills sank low. His were the everlasting ways.

[ 5 : 22 ] I saw the tents of Kushan in affliction. The curtains of the land of Midian did tremble. Was your wrath against the rivers, O Lord? Was your anger against the rivers?

Or your indignation against the sea? When you rode on your horses, on your chariot of salvation? You stripped the sheath from your bow, calling for many arrows.

You split the earth with rivers. The mountains saw you and writhed. The raging water swept on. The deep gave forth its voice. It lifted its hands on high.

The sun and moon stood still in their place. At the light of your arrows as they sped. At the flash of your glittering spear. You marched through the earth in fury.

You threshed the nations in anger. You went out for the salvation of your people. For the salvation of your anointed. You crushed the head of the house of the wicked. Laying him bare from thigh to neck.

[ 6 : 25 ] You pierced with his own arrows the heads of his warriors. Who came like a whirlwind to scatter me. Rejoicing as if to devour the poor in secret. You trample the sea with your horses.

The surging of mighty waters. I hear and my body trembles. My lips quiver at the sound. Rottenness enters into my bones.

My legs tremble beneath me. Yet I will quietly wait for the day of trouble to come upon people who invade us. Though the fig tree should not blossom.

Nor the fruit beyond 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.

[ 7 : 26 ] He makes me tread on my high places. To the choir master with stringed instruments. This is the word of God. Great. Thank you, Justin.

Well, this morning we bring to a close our series on the book of Habakkuk. For the last two weeks we've been looking at this fascinating little book right at the end of the Old Testament.

And today we come to a close. And Habakkuk really is this prophet and he's wrestling with all the big questions of life. Where are you, God? Why don't you seem to answer me?

Don't you care about what's going on around us? Now, just to recap a little bit, very briefly what's happened so we can get a sense of the flow of the book.

In chapter 1 it starts off with Habakkuk and he's very upset because he looks around him in the nation of Israel and he sees violence and wickedness and injustice everywhere.

[ 8 : 23 ] And the nation of Israel doesn't look anything like God's chosen nation. They look just like the nations around them that don't care about God at all. And he says, God, how long is this going to continue?

Why are you doing nothing about it? Don't you care about what's happening? And God replies and says, funny you ask. I actually am doing something about it. Except what he's doing is not what Habakkuk wants to hear.

Because God's answer is, I'm busy raising up the Babylonians, that country up in the north, and they are going to come and invade you and they are my tools to discipline you, to teach Israel to act justly and to love mercy and to walk with their God.

And Habakkuk says, what? You've got to be kidding. How is unrighteous Babylon going to teach us anything about righteousness? How is unjust Babylon going to establish justice in Israel? Israel. And then God responds by urging Habakkuk to trust him. And he says that he has brought Babylon upon Israel for a reason, but their victory will be short-lived.

[ 9 : 30 ] It's just a matter of time before God deals with Babylon's injustice as well. And so that's kind of where we've got to the last two weeks. Now this morning, in our final chapter, we're going to look at three things.

We're going to see Habakkuk's great prayer. Secondly, Habakkuk's troubling vision. And thirdly, Habakkuk's remarkable faith. Okay, that's where we're going this morning.

So Habakkuk has had this whirlwind experience. At times it feels like God is nowhere. God has abandoned him. God is deaf to his cries. And in the next minute, God comes with such fury and power.

And it's like Habakkuk's a bit all over the place. What do I do? God, sometimes you're absent. Sometimes you're here in power. What's going on here? And so what should Habakkuk do? How should he respond? Well, what should we do? How do we respond when we're confronted by the reality that the God of the Bible doesn't fit our neatly packaged ideas of who he is and how he ought to act in the world?

[ 10 : 38 ] When we confront that God blows the banks of how we expect him to act in our world. Well, Habakkuk does the very best thing to do.

He gets on his knees and he prays. And so chapter three starts off with this amazing prayer. Now, what's interesting about this prayer is that it's not just a private prayer.

I don't know if you remember in chapter two, God tells him, he gives him a vision and he says, Habakkuk, write the vision down. Make it clear. Make it plain so that you can tell others about this vision.

Well, God says in a way the same thing. Because what Habakkuk does is he takes this prayer of his and he writes it down in the form of a psalm. And the reason he's doing that is so that followers of Jesus throughout the ages can join in in his psalm, his prayer.

That's why I look at the very last sentence of this very fascinating book is the most uninspiring sentence of the whole book. Did you see how it finished? It says this, to the choir master with stringed instruments.

[ 11 : 42 ] What an anticlimactic way to finish this amazing book of the Bible. And the reason is because Habakkuk wants us to join in in this prayer of his. He's inviting us not just to observe his private devotion.

Oh, that's interesting. Let's see what Habakkuk did. He's inviting us to join in and to make his prayer our own. Okay. And so let's look at this prayer in chapter three, verse two.

He says this, Now, remember, in Habakkuk's day, they weren't living in Hong Kong apartments, right?

But what would happen is that families, entire families, would live under one roof. And extended families, aunts and uncles and granddads, they'd all live as one household under one roof.

Now, in those days, they didn't have Netflix and Instagram and things like that. And so in the evenings, what would you do? What would you do for entertainment? Well, you would go to granddad and you'd say, granddad, tell us a story.

[ 12 : 57 ] Tell us about the time when, you know, Joshua walked around Jericho and the walls came down. Granddad, tell us about that time when the sun stood still in the sky and Joshua defeated the enemies.

Or granddad, tell us about the time when God appeared to Moses in lightning and thunder and fury and power. Or granddad, tell us about the time when God saved his people from Egypt and the waters parted and they walked through on dry ground.

And then the waters came back together and overcame their enemies. And so what they would do is they'd jump on granddad's lap and he would tell them story after story of how God had dramatically acted and crushed his enemies and saved his people.

Time and time again, the story of the Old Testament. And so Habakkuk now looks at the prospect of Babylon coming to invade his people and take them captive. And he remembers all the stories he's heard growing up.

And so he prays. He says, God, I've heard these stories of you. I've heard of how you saved your people there and you delivered your people there. And I've heard the story of how you saved Israel out of Egypt's hands there.

[14:03] What you did in those days, Babylon's coming. Now's a good time to do it again, oh God. Deliver us again. And look at what he says. He says, I've heard the report of you.

Your work, oh Lord, do I fear. In other words, there's something about God's deliverance in the world, which is not just cute and soft and cuddy. There's something fearsome about it.

I don't know if you've ever read the C.S. Lewis's books, The Chronicles of Narnia. If you haven't read them, you've got to read them. Okay. And they are just outstanding.

And in this series, The Chronicles of Narnia, the main character is this lion called Aslan. Okay. And Aslan is lurking in the background.

He's not very present in all the books. But in each book, he kind of appears at the end. But his presence is obvious. He's lurking in the background. But Aslan is kind of a picture of Christ.

[15:01] Because at one point in the book, he lays down his life for the sin of another man so that he takes the punishment that this guy deserves. And he dies so that this man can be set free.

But he doesn't stay dead. He comes alive again. And he crushes his enemies. And so Aslan is this kind of picture of Christ. And so Aslan is this lion. And he's both terrifying.

And yet you cannot help to be drawn to him. There's something appealing about him. You just want to be close to him. And yet at the same time, he's rather fearsome. And early on in the stories, there's this character called Mr. Beaver.

And Mr. Beaver is telling these children that have stumbled into Narnia about Aslan. And they're talking about the great king, Aslan. But he hasn't told them that he's a lion.

And so one of the children says, oh, I'd like to meet this Aslan. Where does he live? And, you know, asking about Aslan. And Mr. Beaver says this. He says, Aslan?

[16:01] Aslan's a lion. He's the great lion. Susan, this child, says, oh, if he's a lion, is he safe? I feel a bit nervous about meeting a lion.

Aslan and Mr. Beaver interrupts him and says, safe? Who said anything about safe? Of course he's not safe. But he is good. He is the king.

And if you've read Narnia, you'll see how beautifully C.S. Lewis captures this idea that Aslan is, he's not safe. He's not tame. He's not cute and cuddly and just rescues his people with toilet paper and cotton wool.

He's fearsome and he's terrifying in some ways. But, oh, he's so good. And there's a part of you that's drawn towards him. But at the same time, you're a bit fearful of his awesomeness.

And that's what is happening with Habakkuk. He says, God, I've heard the stories of you. Your work, O Lord, do I fear. When I hear the stories of how you've saved your people, my palms get a bit sweaty.

[17:02] My heart starts to race. And then he says, God, in our years, revive it. Do it again. God, Babylon is coming. And what you did to them, do to us.

Save us. Rescue us, O God. In our day. And friends, when we read the stories of what God has done in the world, our heart should say something similar.

Our prayer should drive us to pray. We should get on our knees and say, God, what you did in their day, do in our day as well. When we read the book of Acts and we see how God dramatically moved and the miracles he did.

And the signs and the wonders. And how thousands of people came to Christ. Our prayer, watermark, should be, do it again in our day, O God.

And when we read about how Saul, this man that hated God and wanted to crush the church, encounters God and his whole life gets turned around. God, do it in our day again, we pray.

[18:01] Make your ways known. But, be warned, in Acts chapter 5, Ananias and Sapphira, they want to play games with God.

And they end up dead. God, in our day, do it again. In other words, you can't choose your miracle. We can't say, God, do these miracles, but not that miracle, right?

God, when you're going to come, come in power. And friends, when we hear the stories of great revivals, like the revival in the Scottish Hebrides, 1949. Or the revival in Pongyang, North Korea, 1907.

Or the revival that spread from North Korea to Manchuria, China, 1908. Thousands of people coming to know Christ. When you hear those stories, God, do it again in our day. God, don't pass Hong Kong by. In our generation, God, come in the move of your spirit, we pray. In our day, make your ways known. So, Habakkuk prays this amazing prayer.

[ 19 : 02 ] Now, how does God respond to Habakkuk? Well, when you read your Bible, we see that sometimes God responds to our prayer with dramatic move of his spirit.

Revival comes. And sometimes God does nothing. So, in Acts chapter 12, there's this amazing story where Peter is arrested. Remember, Peter's one of Jesus' disciples. He's arrested. He's put in prison. And the day that Herod is about to bring him out of prison to put him on trial, the night before, an angel appears in a cell. His prison chains drop off his hands. This prison door opens. And the angel says, Peter, you free. Walk out. Glory. God, do it in our day, right? Come on. That's the kind of miracle I like.

But why is Peter in prison in the first place? Well, the verse before tells us what happened is that Herod previously had arrested another disciple called James.

[ 20 : 04 ] And he killed him. He put James out and he got James killed. And when Herod saw how much this pleased the crowds, that he could earn some political points by killing disciples, he thought, let's do this again.

And so he then went and arrested Peter. And now Peter's in prison, about to have his head cut off to earn political points for Herod. In other words, here you've got two disciples.

One of them, God sets free. Miraculously, an angel comes and opens the prison cell. The other one loses his head. In other words, friends, the life of a follower of Jesus is not quite as simple as when you get in trouble, just pray God will suddenly make everything rosy for you.

As if God is just this genie and we just rub your magic lamp three times and he's going to appear and say, what can I do for you? Sometimes he delivers you from prison miraculously.

Sometimes your head gets taken off. And friends, in Watermark, there are going to be times when maybe one of us gets sick, gets diagnosed with a life-threatening disease.

[ 21 : 14 ] And as a church, we're going to pray our guts out. God, what you've done in previous days, we've heard the reports of you. Do it in our day again. God, save your people. And maybe God will do it.

But friends, there will be other times when some of us maybe get sick. And there are going to be times when as a family, we stand beside the grave of one of our family members as we mourn their loss.

And you can't, we don't get to dictate to God what happens. There will be times in Hong Kong when Christians face intense persecution. And we pray God's miraculous intervention and deliverance.

But there will be times when God's answer won't necessarily be open doors. His answer will be to us what he said to the Apostle Paul. My grace is sufficient for you. Hold on to me.

Trust me. And that leads us to our second point, to Habakkuk's troubling vision. Because Habakkuk is facing the prospect that Babylon is on their way, about to annihilate Israel, crush them.

[ 22 : 15 ] And he cries out and says, God, now's a pretty good time to perform one of those miracles. God, won't you come and rout the Babylonians and send them home or do something?

I don't know. Send an angel or deliver us again. And how's God going to answer him? Is he going to rout the Babylonian army and destroy them before they even arrive? Is he going to send hail blocks from the sky to fall upon them so that Israel is delivered?

Well, God answers Habakkuk by giving him a vision. And it's a vision or revelation of what God is doing in the world. And the whole book has been about Habakkuk saying, God, what are you up to? And now God is going to answer him and show him what he is up to. And so let's look at this vision that God gives him. Look at how it starts off in verse 3. It's a vision of God on the move.

And so God says this, God came from Timon, the Holy One from Mount Paran. His splendor covered the heavens and the earth was full of his praise.

[ 23 : 17 ] Timon and Paran were places where God met with Moses as they left Egypt and coming to the Promised Land. And it's associated with these divine acts of God's power. So he's saying he has this vision of God coming down in power.

And look at the next verse. It says, His brightness was like the light, rays flashed from his hands. God's coming in power and in glory. Except it's a veiled kind of power.

His glory is not in full display. It's hidden somewhat. Because it says, His brightness was like the light, his rays flashed from his hands. There he veiled his power.

So God comes in power, except he doesn't come in the full force of his power. His power is somewhat held back. It's not wild and barbaric like the Babylonians.

Look at verse 6. It says, Here, Habakkuk sees God pausing. So God is on the move and now he pauses. And he takes stock of the situation.

[ 24 : 17 ] It says, He stood still. He measured the earth. He looked and he shook the nations. There, the eternal nations were scattered. Sorry, the eternal mountains were scattered.

So remember in the Bible, mountains is always a picture of something that is immovable. It's rock steadfast. It can never move. Armies can come and conquer empires.

Foreign forces can overthrow the king. But they're never going to overthrow the mountains. The mountains are steadfast, immovable. Except when God comes. It says, The eternal mountains were scattered like dust.

The everlasting hills, well, turns out they're not so everlasting. When God comes, they sink low into the ground. His ways, God's ways, are the everlasting ways.

So Habakkuk is saying, God, what are you doing? And God says, let me show you. And he sees this vision of God in the move coming down to earth. Now, quick question.

[ 25 : 16 ] In the Old Testament, what is the most dramatic image or picture that the people of God had of his deliverance and his salvation over the enemies? Any idea?

It's the Exodus, right? So remember the Exodus, God comes to Moses and he says, Moses, I've heard your cries. I've seen what's happening. I've come down to deliver you.

And God saves his people by the blood of the lamb. Remember, innocent lambs are slaughtered. Israel is covered by the blood of the lamb. God comes and he passes over his people.

He saves them and he brings judgment on Israel. And Israel is on Egypt. Sorry. This is confusing. Let me try to get that right. He saves Israel.

He brings judgment on the enemies of his people, Egypt. And Israel walks out of Egypt on dry ground and then he closes the waters in on his enemies and he drowns them.

[ 26 : 14 ] Okay? The story of Exodus. In the rest of the vision, the rest of chapter three, look at what happens. Habakkuk sees the Exodus happening all over again.

He sees a vision of seas opening and parting, mountains parting and people walking through, of horses and chariots and God's people being delivered. And what God is saying to Habakkuk, Habakkuk is saying, God, where are you?

What are you doing in the world? And he's saying, Habakkuk, I'm about to bring another Exodus, another type of Exodus. I'm going to save my people by the blood of the lamb.

And why? For what purpose? Well, look at verse 13. He says, You went out, O God, for the salvation of your people, for the salvation of your chosen ones. You crushed the head of the house of the wicked.

You laid him bare from thigh to neck. You pierced the wicked with his own arrows. With his own arrows, you pierced the head of his warriors. In other words, God is saying he's going to use the very weapons of his enemies as his tools to bring about their own downfall.

[ 27 : 22 ] What his enemies expected to be their moment of victory was actually their moment of defeat. You see that? You brought your enemies down with their very own weapons.

You see, Habakkuk cries out to God. And he says, God, I've heard these stories. You delivered Joshua over here. You delivered Moses over there. You delivered your people from Egypt over there and Midian over there.

Now we're facing the Babylonians. God, do it again in our day. And God responds by showing Habakkuk a vision of what he's doing in the world. Except he's not going to say, Habakkuk, this is what I'm doing in your day.

He's zooming out and saying, Habakkuk, this is what I'm doing in the whole world of the whole scope of the history of the world. I am saving my people, destroying my enemies, and putting my glory on display.

Let me see if this makes sense to you. I don't know if you remember when Google Earth first came out. Anyone remember?

[ 28 : 24 ] I remember at school, someone telling me about this thing called Google Earth. Not Google Earth. Google Earth. And when it first came out, what did we all do? Where was the first

place you looked?

Your home, right? Okay, I wasn't the only one. So you all go and you find your home, right? And you zoom in as much as you can. And then what did we do? We zoomed out a little bit.

Remember those old mouths with the scrolly thing? We zoomed out and you see your street. And then you zoom out a bit more and you see your neighborhood or your district. You zoom out a bit more and you see Hong Kong, right?

And then you zoom out and you see Asia. And eventually you zoom out and you see the whole world, right? That's kind of what God is doing here. Habakkuk is saying, God, in our day, rescue us. There's trouble coming. And God is saying, Habakkuk, let me show you a vision of what I'm doing in the world. Let me zoom out. And I want to show you the entire scope of the history of the world.

[ 29 : 21 ] What am I doing in the world? I am rescuing my people. I am overthrowing my enemies. And I'm doing all things for the glory and the praise of my name.

You see, the real enemy here isn't Babylon. The real enemy is the nature and the character of Babylon in the hearts of God's people. They've become just like Babylon. And God is showing Habakkuk that he's going to rescue his people from that enemy.

And that requires more than just a military exercise. That requires more than just a deliverance from this one army. That requires God doing something majestic in the lives of his people.

And so God is showing him that the picture, the entire scope of the world, all history is hurtling towards one climactic and certain end. And what is that end? The salvation of his people.

The conquest of his enemies and his glory being manifested in all creation. And so look again at verse 13 with me. It says, You went out for the salvation of your people, the salvation of your chosen ones.

[ 30 : 26 ] You crushed the head of the house of the wicked, laying him bare from thigh to neck. Verse 3. Your splendor, O God, covered the heavens. The earth was full of your praise.

For the earth will be filled with the glory of the Lord as the waters covers the sea. Now friends, if that's the way that the story ends with God securing salvation for his people, destruction for his enemies and his glory over all the earth, what does that mean for our lives today?

In other words, what does it mean when things go wrong? What does it mean when trouble comes our way, when persecution comes, when the unrighteous seem to flourish and wickedness seems to prosper?

Friends, what do we do when you go to work and the very person that is unethical, taking shortcuts and is making dodgy deals, they get promoted and you get retrenched?

How do we respond? Friends, how do we respond when someone who makes your life a misery and is making your life difficult, one of their loved ones, let's just say gets sick with cancer or something and gets healed, goes into remission and your loved one gets sick and you watch them get weaker and weaker and weaker until eventually they pass away.

[ 31 : 48 ] Where's the justice in that? God, if this is where the whole world is ending, how does that help me today when wickedness flourishes, when things aren't going my way and I don't understand what you're doing in the world?

While we see a picture of how the gospel has cosmic and eternal ramifications, what do we do in the here and now in the midst of the messiness of life, in the tears and the difficulties of a broken world?

Well, that brings us to our third and final point, Habakkuk's remarkable faith because look at what he says in verse 17. In verse 17, Habakkuk gives us the most astounding picture of what it looks like when God said in chapter 2, the righteous will live by faith.

This is what Habakkuk, this is what happens when Habakkuk gets a revelation of the cosmic story of God, the bigness of God and where he's going in the world. Now remember, just before we read this, in ancient times, your crops, okay, so your harvest, was a picture of God's favor and blessing on your life.

So everybody knew in the Old Testament, it's God who brings the rain, it's God who brings the sunshine, it's God that makes the crops grow. So crops is a picture of God's favor in your life. And cattle and animals and livestock is a picture of economic and financial prosperity.

[ 33 : 09 ] Okay? Look at what Habakkuk prays. It says, though the fig tree should not blossom, though the fruit, nor there be any fruit on the vines, though the harvest, the produce of the olive tree fail, and though my harvest yields no food.

So God, even if my harvest absolutely fails and I get nothing from it, in addition to that, even if the flocks are cut off from the fold, if some enemy comes and wipes out all my crops, my flocks, and if there are no animals in the store, so he's saying, God, essentially, if every good thing in my life falls apart, if everything good is taken from me and I'm brought to utter ruin, if my kids flunk out of school, if my business goes down, my loved ones get sick, my life savings is taken from me, now look what he says, God, even if everything goes wrong with me and everything I have is taken from me, I guess I better do the right thing and still serve you.

Is that what he says? God, if everything is taken from me, I guess I better just shut up and not ask any questions because that's what a faithful Christian does. No.

Habakkuk, because he's seen a picture of the greatness and the glory and the majesty of God, he says, God, even if everything goes wrong in my life, yet I will rejoice in you.

I will find joy in the God of my salvation. And the reason why? Not because it's a duty, not because that's what's expected of me, but because the sovereign Lord God is my strength.

[ 34 : 57 ] Friends, Habakkuk has been brought to the place where his hope for the future and his joy in the present is not found in the circumstances of his life, but found simply in who God is.

And so look what he says in verse 19. Because the sovereign Lord is my strength, he makes my feet like the deer. He makes me tread on high places. I don't know if you've ever seen a picture, I've got one, two pictures, of those mountain goats, right?

These incredible animals that can somehow, I think we've got a picture, I don't know if you can see that, these animals that can somehow balance in the most precarious situation.

When it's like 80 degrees, they can somehow balance and still find food on these mountain terrains, right? These animals that their feet are so nimble and so perfectly light that they can hold themselves up even in the most outrageous situations.

It's the very opposite of being weighed down. Friends, when you and I are stressed, what do we do? When things go wrong, how do we feel? How do most of us Hong Kongers feel most of the time?

[ 36 : 11 ] We feel like the weight of the world is on our shoulders, right? Sometimes I feel like my feet are like elephants' feet, not deer's feet. But Habakkuk here, he says, God, when I've got a revelation of who you are, when I've seen, because I've seen your cosmic gospel story, how you are working all things together to save your people, to crush your enemies, and to put your glory on display, when I see that, it's like the weight of the world is taken off of my shoulders.

You make my feet light like a deer. You make me skip on high places like there's not a care in the world. And why is that? Because he's seen God's greatness and he's seen God's goodness.

Because the sovereign Lord is in charge of all history and it all ends with the salvation of his people, the destruction of his enemies, and the glory of God covering the earth like the waters cover the sea.

Now, as we come to a close, I want us to ask this question. Where do we get this kind of faith from? Where do we get this kind of faith?

You see, throughout the Bible, God tells us again and again that it's not the most dedicated that are the people of God. It's not the most moral or the most upright. It's certainly not the most religious that are part of the people of God.

[ 37 : 32 ] It's simply those that are of faith. So where do we find this kind of faith? How do we get the place like Habakkuk where we can say, though the whole world were to fall apart, God, I will still trust you.

I will still delight in you. God gave Habakkuk this vision, but what are we going to do? How are you and I going to get this faith? Well, friends, the answer is that God has given us even more than a vision.

He's given us a picture, except it's a far more clear and vivid picture, and it's a picture of himself, because in Jesus Christ, God came down, and he came in glory, but it was a veiled glory.

It was a hidden glory. It was a glory obscured in his humanity. Friends, don't you see how God gave Habakkuk a vision? It is a vision of how God comes down in glory, but it's a veiled glory.

It's a hidden glory. He comes, and he overthrows his enemies, and he says in chapter 16 how you, God, destroy your enemies with their own weapons. The very things that the enemies thought were their moment of victory is actually their moment of defeat.

[ 38 : 44 ] Well, friends, God came down to us in the person of Jesus Christ. He came down in his glory, except it was a veiled and hidden glory. It was obscured by his humanity, and there upon the

cross, Jesus took the very means by which Satan and the whole host of hell thought they had achieved their victory, and he turned it against them as their moment of defeat.

On the cross, by dying on the cross, Jesus made an end to death forever. By going to the grave, Jesus silenced the mockery of the grave. By absorbing the judgment of God, Jesus ended all our judgment.

By Jesus taking our sin upon himself, he dealt the death blow to sin forever. Friends, on the cross, Jesus Christ was once again rescuing his people from the domain of darkness, and how did he do it?

By the blood of the Lamb. Sometimes we may be tempted to put our faith in our great faith, our confidence for the future, and our ability to hold on to God.

But friends, what God is telling us to do here is to look to the man upon the cross, to look to Christ, to look to Calvary, and what Jesus accomplished there.

[ 40 : 00 ] Because in many ways, Habakkuk's vision is just a black and white image. It's a shadow of the true picture that is found in Christ. God gave Habakkuk a vision.

Friends, he gave you and I the real person. He gave us Christ, God, in human form. In the book of Hebrews, the writer of Hebrews is urging his people, the recipients, to live a life of faith.

And he quotes Habakkuk chapter 2 where he says, the righteous will live by faith. And then he goes on and he gives this long list of all these great men and women in the Old Testament that lived these lives of remarkable faith.

Abraham, and Moses, and David, and Samson. Samson. And he's urging the followers, his recipients, to become men and women of faith like these great men and women of faith.

And he's urging us likewise to be men and women of faith as well. And so, the writer to Hebrews says, friends, it's not by morality, it's not by religion, it's by faith that you obtain the promises of God.

[ 41 : 09 ] And then he gives these biographical accounts. And then at the end of that section, he changes track and he says this. He says, therefore, brothers and sisters, because we are surrounded by such a great cloud, a host of witnesses, of other men and women that have gone before us and lived by faith, let us also put aside everything that entangles us and hinders us from Christ and weighs us down.

And let us run with endurance the race of faith that is before us. Looking to who? Looking to these great men and women of faith? Looking to Moses?

Looking to Abraham? Looking to Habakkuk? No. Looking to Jesus, the founder and the perfecter and the substance of your faith.

Looking to Jesus, the one who started your faith and the one who will bring it to an end. The one who started you off in the Christian life and the one who will get you to the end. The one who created the world and the one who will be there at the end vanquishing his enemies.

Looking to Jesus, the founder and the perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was before him endured the cross, despising its shame and is now seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

[ 42 : 31 ] Friends, the life of a Christian really is the life of faith. The righteous will live by faith. But this faith is not merely intellectual assent to the facts of the Bible.

It's not intellectually agreeing to the facts of history or what the Bible says. Rather, it is a joyful trusting, a hoping in, a delighting in God in the midst of trials and tragedy.

And where do we find that kind of faith? We look to Jesus. We look to the cross. We look to the one who is the bedrock and the substance of our faith. We look to the one who was stripped of everything.

You see, Habakkuk prays and he says, hypothetically, if my crops were to fail, if the animals all die, hypothetically speaking, God, I will still take joy in you. Friends, for Jesus wasn't hypothetical.

Jesus Christ was stripped of everything. He was stripped of his dignity and his honor as he was nailed to the cross. He was stripped of his friends as he's betrayed and denied them ever knowing him.

[ 43 : 36 ] He's stripped of his life as he's hung onto the cross and ultimately he's stripped even of his father's favor as his father turns his back on him and pours out his wrath on him on the cross.

Friends, that's where we look. We look to Jesus. Friends, in this lifetime we will have trouble. In this lifetime we will experience horror and calamity and difficulty.

And friends, in this room today there are some of us that have experienced unprecedented grief. grief that I will never even know about. Friends, what do we do in the midst of those times?

Many of us will be stripped bare. We'll come to the end of ourselves. We'll have nothing to cling on to. And in that place we'll find that Christ is holding on to us far more than we could ever hold on to him.

Let me close with this brief story. In 1967, many years ago, there was this young lady, she's 18 years old.

[ 44 : 37 ] Her name is Johnny Erickson. Her name was Johnny, named after her father. Her father was also Johnny. She's this energetic young lady. She loves hiking, horse riding, swimming.

And she's 18 years old and she goes for a hike in the mountains with some friends. There's a creek and there's a pool of water and she decides to dive into the pool and cool off.

And she dives in and she misjudges the shallowness of the water and she fractures some vertebra and she's left a paraplegic for the rest of her life.

And so, in that moment, her entire life changes. And for the rest of her life, she's in a wheelchair. 18 years old, paraplegic. But she does know Jesus and she does know that God is with her in the midst of it.

She knows that God doesn't always answer her prayers the way that she would want. But she does know that God has got a plan for all of history and that even though in this life there is trouble, there is coming a life when every tear will be wiped away, every wickedness will be done away with, and our bodies will be made perfect and whole again.

[ 45 : 47 ] One author said, actually, this life is like the contents page of a great book. It's just the very first page. But there is coming a whole new life to come in eternity. And so, Joni Erikson knows this.

And so, she decides that in the midst of the storms of life she's going to keep on trusting God. Well, friends, today she's written over 40 books on trusting God and the difficulty of life.

She's at the moment busy battling cancer for the second time. But in one of her books she writes this. She says, let me read it to us. She says, the truth is in this world it's 100% certain, guaranteed, that we will suffer.

But at the same time Jesus Christ is 100% certain to meet us, to encourage us and to comfort us, to grace us with strength and perseverance. And yes, even restore joy in our lives.

Your Savior is 100% certain to be with you through every challenge of life. Oh, how we need to grasp the soul-settling hope found in the pages of God's Word.

[ 46 : 50 ] But not only to grasp it, but to allow the hope of God to fill and overflow in our hearts, transforming us into people who are confident and at peace with ourselves, with our God, and with our circumstances.

Friends, where are we going to find this soul-settling hope? Not only in the pages of Scripture, not only in God's written Word, but in His living Word.

In the person that the pages of Scripture point to, to the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Friends, this very week, in the morning, tomorrow morning, trouble and difficulty is going to come your way. And you're going to have the opportunity to either trust yourself or to despair and lose hope or to turn to Jesus and to find your hope and your confidence and faith in the challenges in the midst of the difficulties of life.

Habakkuk calls us to lay aside everything that entangles us and weigh us down, to continue to look to Jesus, knowing our only hope is in Him, to find the answers to our questions in Him, to find the joys in the midst of the sorrows and ultimately our true hope in Him.

[ 48 : 00 ] Habakkuk says, and he urges us to join Him, though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, though the produce of the olive tree fail, though the harvest yields no food, though the flocks be cut off from the fold and there are no animals in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord my God.

I will take joy in the God of my salvation. And that's what the book of Habakkuk is all about. Let's pray together. I want to pray for us together as a community, but if you would like prayer at all, we're going to continue our time of worship.

And if you'd like prayer, I really do want to ask you to come up to the front. There are going to be some prayer stewards here. And maybe you want prayer because you've gone through some great trial and tragedy, maybe recently, maybe many years ago, and you just want God to draw near to you.

You want to come and bring the pain to Him. Come, we'd love to pray with you. Maybe you feel like you're in the midst of the storms and you feel like, God, I don't know which way to turn. I feel weighed down.

The weight of the world is on my shoulders. Come, we'd love to pray with you. Maybe you just feel anxious about life. Maybe you feel like you've lost your hope.

[ 49 : 30 ] And you want Christ to open the eyes of your heart again, to restore you, that you can see Him and trust in Him again. Come to Him. We'd love to pray with you.

Father God, this morning we come to you because our hope is found in you. God, we don't come to you because you miraculously just make life comfortable and convenient.

We don't come to you, God, because you are just a means to another end. You are end in itself, God. You are our hope. You are our joy. God, you are our comfort in the storm.

God, you are our purpose when life is full of questions. Father, when we come to the end of ourselves, may we in that place find, God, that you have been there all along, holding on to us and not letting us go.

Father, pray for us as a church, Lord. I pray, God, that Watermark will be a church that we will be like Habakkuk and have remarkable faith, God, because we look to you, Jesus, the one who, for the joy that was set before you, endured the cross, despising its shame and is now seated at the throne of God the Father.

[ 50 : 51 ] Christ, help us to look to you, we pray. I pray for each one of us here this morning, God. God, you know the trials and the challenges we're facing. You know the fears and the worries.

You know the anxieties and the concerns. Lord Jesus, come and minister to us. Holy Spirit, come and draw near. Come and lift us up, God.

God, come and turn our mourning into rejoicing again. Come and help us to trust you.