

Christ My High Place – *Habakkuk 3*

Introduction – It was settled then. In His sovereign goodness, His good sovereignty, God was going to bring judgment down upon Judah by means of the Chaldeans. This would all be the hand of God and even the Chaldeans would suffer judgment for their wicked acts. Dark days loomed ahead. Yet Habakkuk has learned that *“the just shall live by his faith”* (2:4). That is the central lesson. And when the God Who speaks that Word gets a hold of him, Habakkuk writes a song. The song displays the staggering breadth of God’s sovereignty and ends with deep, resounding, impenetrable joy.

In the Midst of the Years (vv1-2) – When the LORD first answered Habakkuk, He warned that what He was going to say and then do would be utterly astounding and that *“you would not believe, though it were told you”* (1:5). Now that Habakkuk has heard from the LORD, his reaction is fear (v2). If it was only fear of an omnipotent Being then there would be nothing to do but gut it out. But this fear comes with faith – a faith that is exercised when there is no possibility of seeing God’s goodness in the moment. That faith says, *“revive Your work.”* *“Thy will be done”* (Matt 6:10). That faith says, *“make it known.”* Grant understanding. *“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom”* (Prov 9:10). James invites us to ask God for this wisdom during various trials (James 1:2-6). Finally, that faith knows and asks from a Personal God for mercy, *“In wrath remember mercy.”* Jeremiah would remind us that His mercies are *“new every morning”* (Lam 3:22-24). *In the midst of the years* of Your hard providences, we will fear with faith that cries out to do Your will, to grant understanding, and to remember Your mercy.

The Glory of the LORD in His Coming (vv3-15) – This is a composed piece of art. A song that paints pictures in your imagination. This is how God wants us to meditate on His utter sovereignty, holiness, wrath, and salvation. He reveals Himself like this in apocalyptic figurative speech (John will use very similar images in Revelation). He is the One who brings the judgment and the deliverance. He comes upon and over the earth (v3), His glory covering all of heaven and earth. Jesus is identified as the *“Coming One”* (Matt 11:3) and Peter condemns unbelieving Israel, *“you denied the Holy One and the Just”* (Acts 3:14) sealing their fate for a destruction far more awesome than the devastations wrought by Babylon. Suffering believers are exhorted to hold fast their profession and not return to Jerusalem because *“He Who is coming will come, and will not tarry”* (Heb 10:37). This is why John would use similar speech in foretelling the destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD.

God is Light (1 John 1:5) and when He squeezes His hand rays flash from between His fingers like spears, bringing forth pestilence and plague (vv4-5). He measures the earth and mountains bow before Him, as do all nations (vv6-7). We are to remember how He moved rivers and seas in His works of deliverance and all creation groaned in obedience (vv8-11). No evil slowed Him and He brought salvation to His people with His Christ (vv12-13). They came out at Him like a whirlwind but He thrust them through with their own arrows (vv14-15).

Those who grew up with the Old Testament Scriptures and knew of the Lord’s fulfillment of these prophecies upon Judah certainly understood the impending judgment being pronounced upon their generation as John records these last words of Jesus – *“He who testifies to these things says, “Surely I am coming quickly.” Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!”* (Rev 22:20).

Staggering Awe (v16) – What happens when you “see” this kind of sovereignty over everything, everywhere, all the time and in all times? What happens when Isaiah sees the glory of God in the days of judgment upon his nation (Isaiah 6:5)? What happens when Job sees the glory of God in the midst of his personal tragedies (Job 40:4-5)? We worship the LORD who ordains every wicked event and terrible trial, every accident, every disease, every financial difficulty, every broken relationship, every pain and every death. He sent it. He sent it to you. Habakkuk’s body shudders as he considers he must live with the constant anticipation of God’s coming judgment.

When Daniel’s friends were about to be thrown into the fiery furnace, they said they knew their God could deliver them. They also said that regardless of whether God would deliver them, they would not bow down to any idol (Dan 3:17-18). God did not deliver them (Dan 3:21-23). We forget that part. It seemed God’s timing was off. He was late.

One more scene. When the remnant of faithful Israel was reduced to a single individual, Jesus, peering into the awesome abyss of Hades and the Cross through which He would go, sweated great drops of blood (Luke 22:44). His soul was exceedingly troubled (Matt 26:38) and his body shuddered. The full blow of God’s wrath was about to fall upon Him. *“And I trembled in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble.”* Jesus knew His Father was completely sovereign – and entirely good. *“Not my will, but Yours be done”* (Luke 22:42). And then He went and suffered and died. God didn’t deliver Him. He was too late.

Of course, we know in both of those stories God did deliver, just according to His own plan and purpose. He walked with the friends in the fiery furnace and He did not leave Christ in the grave. “*The just shall live by faith*” but this is true in times of apparent victory and in times when there appears to be no victory – as we learn from the saints of old (Heb 11:32-38).

Christ My High Place (vv17-18) – And so when everything seems lost and gone, when there is no deliverance and no balm for the pain and sorrow, that is the moment when those with faith rejoice in the LORD and joy in the God of their salvation. Deprived of all material benefits and no promise of deliverance from a great coming judgment, he finds himself nevertheless lifted to the heights of courageous, unfathomable joy. What is God’s ultimate purpose for your life? It is your unending joy in Him. He uses “right-handed” blessings, straight up goodness. And He uses “left-handed” blessings, hard providences that you cannot see through except with eyes of faith.

God is using every task in your life, along with every interruption, and every trial, as His instruments to accomplish in you what He seeks to accomplish – unending joy in Him upon the high places. It doesn’t come in one fell swoop. It comes through those trials – and so Paul prays that Christ would dwell in our hearts by faith – a faith that lives – and grant us understanding of the deep love of Jesus that is ours (Eph 3:14-21).

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