

Title: Faith's Joy
Text: Hab 3: 16-19
Date: Aug 26, 2021
Place: SGBC, NJ

The Prophet Habakkuk is thought to have preached during the time of Jeremiah—toward end of king Josiah's reign—about 600 years before Christ came

His name means “embrace.” He was a man embraced by God, who therefore embraced God. And Habakkuk embraced the church. While his kinsman regarded him not, Habakkuk still loved them, embraced them and preached God's word to them and prayed to God for them.

But God showed Habakkuk that God was bringing judgment upon the children Israel using Babylon. Their hearts were lifted up in pride. They esteemed themselves righteous, holy and persevering by their works and their strength. Their hearts were full of pride. God's word to Habakkuk is the gospel that God's people are saved through faith in Christ alone.

Habakkuk 2: 3: For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry. 4: Behold, his soul *which* is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith.

The “just shall live by faith” is quoted three times in the new testament—each time declaring Christ is that which faith looks to him for.

Righteousness—Romans 1: 16-17 declares God's elect are made righteous through faith in Christ—from the Faith of Christ to the faith of his child God imputes Christ's righteousness. True faith believes Christ is our Righteousness—*16: For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. 17: For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.*

Sanctification—Galatians 3:11 declares God's elect are sanctified, not by our works, but through faith in Christ. The Judaizers were promoting sanctification by works. But that is the same as seeking justification by works. That is why Paul uses the word justified. Having been sanctified by the Spirit of God to behold Christ is our Justifier and our Sanctification, true faith lives looking only to Christ by faith—*11: But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. 12: And the law is not of faith: the man that DOETH them shall live in them.*

Preservation—Hebrews 10:38-39 declares those God has given faith shall persevere unto the end living by faith in Christ. True faith believes Christ is our Preserver who shall keep us unto the end. Hebrews quotes Habakkuk as saying “HE shall come.”—*Hebrews 10:35: Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. 36: For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. 37 For yet a little while, and HE that shall come will come, and will not tarry. 38: Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. 39: But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.*

In all three applications, Christ is what faith looks to Christ for! We are justified through faith in Christ our Righteousness. We are sanctified through faith in Christ our Holiness. We persevere through faith in Christ our Strength. God says through Habakkuk, “*Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith.*”

Since Israel was lifted up in pride and refused to believe on Christ and walk by faith, God sent temporal judgment. He sent the Chaldeans (Babylon) upon the whole land. Afterwards God judged Babylon. Babylon represents mystery Babylon—which is falsehood of every kind. She covers the world, ever increasing her converts in religion and out. The world becomes more accepting of everything contrary to God and it shall become worse and worse. In final judgment God will judge mystery Babylon, that is, all outside of Christ, even as he did the nation Babylon.

But the vision of judgment Habakkuk saw was the vision of Christ bearing the judgment of his people on the cross, as well as that last judgment. Christ is coming again to judge the world. But the judgment of his people was settled in Christ on the cross. God declared,

Habakkuk 1: 5: Behold ye among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvellously: for I will work a work in your days, which ye will not believe, though it be told you.

In Acts 13: 26-41 Paul applied this to Christ bearing the judgment of his people on the cross and saving his people out of all nations on this earth.

So true faith beholds Christ on the cross and walks by faith in Christ. Whatever temporal judgment God sends it is chastening for the child of God, not wrath. Therefore, true faith is made to embrace Christ in whom we are complete and who provides all as we live and walk by faith in him. We hear faith’s joy in Habakkuk’s last words in chapter 3.

Habakkuk 3: 16: 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. 17: Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither *shall* fruit *be* in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and *there shall be* no herd in the stalls: 18: Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation. 19: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. To the chief singer on my stringed instruments.

Proposition: True faith finds joy only in the Lord, in the God of my salvation.

Subject: Faith’s Joy

FAITH JOY IS NOT IN OUR SINFUL FLESH

Habakkuk 3: 16: 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.

Daniel 10: 8: Therefore I was left alone, and saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength.

Then Christ spoke and touched Daniel and settled him on Christ. The same was true with Habakkuk. The Spirit must subdue our sin-nature making rottenness enter into our bones that we might rest in Christ in the day of trouble.

The Spirit of God convinces Christ’s redeemed: *of sin*—because we believed not on Christ; *of righteousness*—because Christ has gone to the Father; *of judgment*—because the prince of this world is judged.

This flesh subduing work of the Spirit continues. When our sinful flesh needs to be subdued, the Spirit never ceases convincing us of these three things. When he does our flesh trembles, our lips quivers and rottenness enters into our bones. Our pride is dealt a blow. Our fleshly strength is made weakness. Our self-will is cast down. The purpose of God is that we might have no strength in our flesh but that we might rest in Christ alone by faith. When Christ first converts us, and every time thereafter, he makes us cease from our flesh, so that faith’s joy remains in Christ alone!

FAITH’S JOY IS NOT IN THINGS

Habakkuk 3: 17: Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither *shall* fruit *be* in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and *there shall be* no herd in the stalls: 18: Yet I will rejoice in the LORD,...

These things represent “carnal things” which we typically consider as blessings. Indeed, God has blessed us with many temporal blessings. But faith’s joy is not in things but in the Lord alone. Though all these “things” be removed, Habakkuk says, “*yet, I will rejoice in the LORD.*”

When God removes temporal “things” false faith finds no rejoicing in the Lord alone, because false faith rejoices in the things. Listen to God.

Amos 4: 6: I have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and want of bread in all your places, yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord...[God withheld rain] 8: So two *or* three cities wandered unto one city, to drink water; but they were not satisfied: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD. 9: I have smitten you in blasting and mildew; when your gardens and your vineyards, and your fig trees and your olive trees increased, the palmer worm devoured them: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord. 10: I have sent among you the pestilence after the manner of Egypt; your young men have I slain with the sword, and have taken away your horses; and I have made the stink of your camps to come up unto your nostrils: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord. 11: I have overthrown some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a firebrand plucked out of the burning: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord.

But we see true faith in Lot. When God overthrew Sodom, Lot lost all temporal possessions, even his dearest loved one. But God saved Lot himself and where did Lot’s faith rejoice. Lot said, “*Behold now, thy servant hath found grace in thy sight, and thou hast magnified thy mercy, which thou has showed unto me in saving my life*” (Gen 19: 19). Lot possessed true faith. His joy was in the mercy which God magnified toward him, despite his awful sin. By saving Lot from all his possessions and that city, God saved him from that which was nothing but a hindrance to him. Lot rejoiced altogether in God’s free grace.

Whatever God takes away, be it temporal prosperity through a lower income or no income, true faith joys in Jehovah-Jireh knowing the Lord will provide. He took it away to keep me knowing he is my only provider!

If God takes away good health and gives painful disease, true faith joys in Christ knowing the great Physician has made our soul ever whit whole. He gave me the disease to keep me rejoicing that he alone is the Balm of Gilead!

If God takes from us peace in our lives and gives great troubles, true faith joys in Jehovah Shalom, Christ our Peace. He took away temporal peace to keep me knowing he is my Peace with God.

If trouble put faith in a sinner then the whole world would have believed on Christ a long time ago. But God’s sanctifying grace sanctifies each tear of his child. When God removes temporal things true faith joys in the LORD alone.

It is because the promises of God never change in Christ though he may change all our outward circumstances. Is there one promise that you can say trouble has changed? One promise that you can say is now null and void due to trouble? True faith joys in our immutable God who changes not and neither does our salvation in him change. Has the Spirit of God purged your conscious with the blood of Christ so that you have peace knowing Christ has put away all your sins? Free justification is not taken away when temporal things are taken away.

Also, these things represent the means of grace. We are thankful for the preaching of the gospel. We assemble together to hear Christ preached and delight to do so. But when God gives a famine of hearing the word preached, true faith goes on joying in the Lord alone.

We love our brethren and thank God for one another. But in the day God makes us be like Elijah so that we see no brethren and think we are left alone, true faith joys in the Lord alone.

All earthly cisterns will leak out but the fountain of living waters never runs dry! If we live for earthly bread, earthly joy, if our joy is in the means of grace rather than the God of all grace then where will our joy be in famine when all is taken away? But if our life is Christ the Bread we will joy in Christ come what may. True faith does not say, “The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away.” True faith says, “*The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord*” (Job 1:21).

FAITH’S JOY IS THE LORD ALONE

Habakkuk 3: 18: Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation. 19: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. To the chief singer on my stringed instruments.

Faith’s joy is in the *God of my salvation*. If he is the God of my salvation in eternal matters so that Christ is my righteousness, Christ is my holiness, Christ is my acceptance with God, then I will rejoice knowing that he is the God of my salvation in all lesser temporal matters.

Faith rejoices that “*the LORD God is my strength.*” If he is omnipotent to send me trouble, he is omnipotent to strengthen me to endure it! Christ is our omnipotent Savior. All Strength is his because all power is his in heaven and in earth. When Christ speaks the universe obeys. Whatever trouble he sends in this life is nothing compared to the day when the Lord Jesus comes to judge this world in righteousness.

Jeremiah 12: 5: If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and *if* in the land of peace, *wherein* thou trustedst, *they wearied thee*, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?

Faith’s joy is that though I am utter weakness, Christ is my Strength in whom I am complete. Therefore no matter the trouble, faith rejoices that my Savior is my strength in his judgment now and in the final judgment to come.

By being our salvation and strength, faith rejoices knowing God our Savior shall do these two things:

"*And he will make my feet like hinds’ feet.*" The hind is the deer. Nothing is as sure footed as a deer. I can’t recall seeing a deer lose its footing even when startled. In our flesh we will surely lose our footing. But in the inner man our gracious Lord will make our feet like hind’s feet. God establishes the feet of his child on Christ the Rock. He has set my feet on the Rock, the sure Foundation.

“*And he will make me to walk upon mine high places.*” From an airplane, we look down and see how small we are. When he makes us walk upon our high places, finding ourselves seated in Christ at God’s right hand, these troubles below become mighty small.

Christ is faith’s enduring joy. “Whom having not seen, ye love”—meaning the gracious Redeemer—“In whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory” (1 Pet 1: 8) It is not true joy that lasts only as long as health and strength and temporal things last. Christ is the Joy of those in whom he abides. He is the joy of all things he gives. When he takes all those things, he is still faith’s joy!

Amen!