

Habakkuk 3:1–19 – Singing Faith in a Shaking World

1. A Prayer Sung with Passion (Habakkuk 3:1–2)

A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet, on Shigionoth. (Habakkuk 3:1, NKJV)

Habakkuk ends his book not with an argument, but with a song. Chapter 3 is both a prayer and a psalm, meant to be sung with deep emotion. The prophet has wrestled honestly with God’s ways; now he worships.

*O Lord, I have heard Your speech and was afraid;
O Lord, revive Your work in the midst of the years!
In the midst of the years make it known;
In wrath remember mercy. (Habakkuk 3:2, NKJV)*

God has told Habakkuk that He will use Babylon as His instrument of judgment against Judah. Habakkuk is stunned and shaken: “I have heard Your speech and was afraid.” He knows discipline is coming, and it frightens him.

Yet he prays three crucial things:

1. “Revive Your work” – “Keep Your work alive, Lord. Do not abandon what You have started among Your people.”
2. “In the midst of the years make it known” – “Let Your purposes be clear as time unfolds. Do not leave us in the dark.”
3. “In wrath remember mercy” – “When You judge, do not forget to be merciful.”

This is not a man who has figured everything out. It is a man who chooses to trust God’s heart, even when he trembles at God’s plan.

Practical Application

When you see judgment, loss, or discipline on the horizon:

- Ask God to revive His work in and around you, not just preserve your comfort.
- Ask Him to make His ways known to you as much as you can bear.
- Ask Him to remember mercy toward His people and toward a broken world.

2. A Vision of the God Who Comes (Habakkuk 3:3–15)

Beginning in verse 3, Habakkuk uses rich, poetic language (in the original Hebrew) to describe God coming in power:

*God came from Teman,
The Holy One from Mount Paran. Selah
His glory covered the heavens,
And the earth was full of His praise. (Habakkuk 3:3, NKJV)*

Teman and Mount Paran point to the south—toward the wilderness regions where God once led Israel, appeared at Sinai, and acted in saving power. Habakkuk looks back to God’s mighty acts in history and, at the same time, looks ahead to God’s final intervention in judgment and salvation.

*His brightness was like the light;
He had rays flashing from His hand,
And there His power was hidden. (Habakkuk 3:4, NKJV)*

The picture is like sunlight bursting from behind clouds—“rays flashing from His hand.” God’s power is overwhelming, yet veiled. We see enough to know He is glorious; we do not see all that He is.

*Before Him went pestilence,
And fever followed at His feet. (Habakkuk 3:5, NKJV)*

This imagery reminds us that when God rises to judge, creation itself trembles and societies shake. Disease, disaster, and upheaval are sometimes part of His mysterious dealings with a rebellious world.

*He stood and measured the earth; He looked and startled the nations.
And the everlasting mountains were scattered, The perpetual hills bowed.
His ways are everlasting. (Habakkuk 3:6, NKJV)*

What seems solid and unshakable to us—mountains, nations, systems—is nothing before Him. He measures the earth. He startles the nations. His ways are everlasting, even when everything temporary is collapsing.

Habakkuk continues to describe God’s power in creation and history—rivers, seas, sun, moon, nations—all responding to Him (Habakkuk 3:7–12). He is not just the God of Judah; He is Lord of all the earth.

*You went forth for the salvation of Your people,
For salvation with Your Anointed.
You struck the head from the house of the wicked... (Habakkuk 3:13, NKJV)*

Here the prophet sees that when God rises in judgment, it is not random rage; it is purposeful salvation. He comes for the salvation of His people and with His Anointed—language that ultimately points forward to the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

God’s judgment is real, but so is His saving intent. He confronts evil, dismantles oppressive powers, and rescues those who belong to Him.

Practical Application

- God is not a distant observer. He has acted in history and will act again.
- His power shakes what we think cannot be shaken—governments, economies, even the natural order—but His purposes are rooted in righteousness and salvation.
- When you feel overwhelmed by how fragile the world is, remember: God’s ways are everlasting, even when everything else is temporary.

3. Trembling Trust – Habakkuk’s Response (Habakkuk 3:16)

After seeing this vision, Habakkuk does not pretend to be calm and unfazed:

*When I heard, my body trembled;
My lips quivered at the voice;
Rottenness entered my bones;
And I trembled in myself,
That I might rest in the day of trouble.
When he comes up to the people,
He will invade them with his troops. (Habakkuk 3:16, NKJV)*

He is physically shaken—trembling, quivering, feeling weak inside. He knows hard days are coming. Yet he prays that he may “rest in the day of trouble”—not be spared from all difficulty, but find rest in God when trouble comes.

Trust does not always feel bold and strong. Sometimes it trembles. But it still clings to God.

4. “Yet I Will Rejoice” – Faith When Everything Falls Apart (Habakkuk 3:17–19)

Now we reach one of the most powerful confessions of faith in the entire Bible:

*Though the fig tree may not blossom,
Nor fruit be on the vines;
Though the labor of the olive may fail,
And the fields yield no food;
Though the flock may be cut off from the fold,
And there be no herd in the stalls— (Habakkuk 3:17, NKJV)*

In an agricultural society, this describes total economic collapse: no figs, no grapes, no olives, no grain, no sheep, no cattle. In modern terms, it would be like saying:
“Though the markets crash, the savings vanish, the job is lost, the pantry is empty, and every visible support system fails...”

*Yet I will rejoice in the Lord,
I will joy in the God of my salvation. (Habakkuk 3:18, NKJV)*

“Rejoice” here has the idea of leaping for joy. “Joy” points to spinning or exulting because of strong emotion. Habakkuk is not rejoicing in famine, injustice, or violence. He is rejoicing in the Lord—in who God is, not in how comfortable life feels.

His joy is anchored in “the God of my salvation.” Salvation is not just about surviving Babylon or any other crisis; it is about belonging to the God who rescues, forgives, restores, and holds our future.

*The Lord God is my strength;
He will make my feet like deer’s feet,
And He will make me walk on my high hills. (Habakkuk 3:19, NKJV)*

Habakkuk does not say, “I am strong.” He says, “The Lord God is my strength.” God Himself becomes the source of stability and endurance.

“Deer’s feet” picture surefootedness on rough, steep terrain. God does not promise to flatten every hill; He promises to give you what you need to walk the heights with Him, even when the path is rocky and dangerous.

Practical Application for Believers

- Anchor your joy in God Himself, not in circumstances.
You may not always be able to rejoice in what is happening, but you can learn to rejoice in who God is and what He has promised.
- Let God be your strength, not your own resolve.
Your strength will eventually fail. His will not. Learn to say with Habakkuk, “The Lord God is my strength.”
- Ask God to make you surefooted in a shaky world.
He may not remove the difficulty, but He can make you steady in the middle of it.

A Challenge for Believers

If you already know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior:

- Where is your joy rooted?
In your comfort, your income, your health, your plans—or in “the God of my salvation”?
- How do you respond when God’s ways confuse you?
Do you withdraw from Him, or do you move toward Him like Habakkuk—honest, trembling, but willing to trust?
- Are you willing to say, “Lord, revive Your work, in the midst of the years make it known; in wrath remember mercy”?
That might mean God shakes things you wish He would leave alone, for the sake of a deeper work in you and through you.

Let Habakkuk’s journey become yours: from complaint, to listening, to worship, to settled trust.

An Invitation to Non-Believers

If you have never personally turned to Jesus Christ, Habakkuk’s message also speaks to you.

God is holy, just, and powerful. He does not ignore evil forever. Injustice, violence, greed, and idolatry will all be judged. That includes the sins in our own hearts—not just the evil “out there” in the world.

The good news is that before judgment falls, God offers mercy.

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came into this broken world. He lived a sinless life. Then He willingly went to the cross. There He shed His blood to pay for your sins and mine. He took the judgment we deserved. On the third day, God raised Him from the dead, declaring that He is God, Savior, and Lord.

You cannot make yourself righteous. You cannot erase your own guilt. But God offers you forgiveness, a new heart, and eternal life if you will turn to His Son.

God calls you to respond with:

- Repentance – turning from sin and self-rule.
- Faith – trusting Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior.

If that is the desire of your heart, you might pray something like this:

*“Lord God, I confess that I have sinned against You.
I know that I cannot make myself right before You.
I believe that Jesus Christ shed His blood on the cross for my sins,
and that You raised Him from the dead, declaring that He is God, Savior, and Lord.
I turn from my sin and my self-directed way of life.
I ask You to forgive me, cleanse me, and make me new.
Jesus, I receive You as my Lord and Savior.
Teach me to live by faith and to follow You from this day forward.
In Your name I pray. Amen.”*

If you truly turn to Him, He will not turn you away.

Habakkuk began with “How long, O Lord?” and ended with “Yet I will rejoice in the Lord.” The circumstances had not yet changed—but his heart had. The same God who carried him to that place of trembling trust can carry you, as you look to Jesus, who loved you, shed His blood for you, and rose again in victory.