

## My Notes:

<sup>16</sup> 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.

On the Roller Coaster of Life



<sup>17</sup> Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on 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

As Bad As It Gets

<sup>18</sup> yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will take joy in the God of my salvation.

<sup>19</sup> God, the Lord, is my strength; he makes my feet like the deer's; he makes me tread on my high places.

To the choirmaster: with stringed instruments.

*Its Time to Sing*



# LESSONS FROM THE OLD SCHOOL

Yet I Will Rejoice!



## Habakkuk 3:16-20 ESV

<sup>16</sup> 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. <sup>17</sup> Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on 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, <sup>18</sup> yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will take joy in the God of my salvation. <sup>19</sup> God, the Lord, is my strength; he makes my feet like the deer's; he makes me tread on my high places. To the choirmaster: with stringed instruments.

## Key Lessons for the Night

### Faithfully Waiting

- God's work must take place in history and though we participate in it we do not command the hand of God. Rather, in the midst of our journeys we take hold of the hand of God trusting him by faith as he writes. Life can be seen as riding on a Roller Coaster. We climb on through the wonder and joy of being a kid. Then we go up some steep hills and get a bit freaked out. We know what is coming, a big plunge that will scare the mess out of us...so we wait, and go down, and back up, but in faith we know the designer is bringing this ride to his desired end. Such is life.

### Habakkuk Knew Life Could (and for him would) Get Bad

- Habakkuk poetically describes life getting as bad as it possible can. From losing life's simple pleasures and luxuries, to losing basic things which make life work in culture, to losing food and clothing and all of our basic provisions. He did not blink at this but rather found something more delightful in life than all the pleasures it affords.

### Rejoicing in God in All Circumstances

- Nothing, absolutely nothing at all had circumstantially changed for Habakkuk from the beginning to the ending of this book. The Chaldeans were still going to be the opening act in Judah very soon, the people of God were jacked up and will be judged, the scene was going to be a disaster area very soon. Nothing circumstantially had changed! But something had changed. We think that the only thing that can fix us, heal us, change us, is if things start going differently. If life were easier for us, if that boss or girlfriend or boyfriend, or husband, wife, job, you name it...JUST CHANGED! We would then be better. Yet what changed for Habakkuk was not his circumstances at all, rather it was his vision of God that had changed. He fixed his eyes upon the living God and trusted him. He loved God above all things and then he rejoiced and worshipped. To serve in the mission of Jesus our life and satisfaction must be found in him. For only then, can we really pursue the mission of the gospel despite the costs to our lives.



## Figs, Flocks and 401ks – A Meditation on God’s Provision for Joy

As we come to the close of Habakkuk’s ancient prophecy we arrive at one of the most beautiful and poetic passages in Scripture. Habakkuk has seen the coming judgment upon Judah and wrestled with his God about the coming days. He has been reassured both of the righteousness and justice of God’s plan which will in no way clear the guilty Chaldeans of their treachery and God’s faithful preservation of a people for himself who will come out on the other side of the coming disaster. His questions have been asked, his concerns raised, his passion poured out and he has heard a great reassurance from the living God. What is left to do? Should he go buy bullets and shotguns to prepare for the end times of Judah? Should he rally the army and try to protect his nation? An interesting thing happens here at the end of the book. Habakkuk contemplates the coming reality and welcomes it in with worship. Lets look at his beautiful poetry in chapter 3, verses 17-19.

<sup>17</sup>Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on 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, <sup>18</sup>yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will take joy in the God of my salvation. <sup>19</sup>God, the Lord, is my strength; he makes my feet like the deer’s; he makes me tread on my high places. To the choirmaster: with stringed instruments.

For us this requires a little reflection to grasp fully as we are a people who find their daily provision from the Publix or Kroger grocery store (or in the case of some of the single guys, frequent trips thinking outside of the bun at Taco Bell). So journey with me back into ancient Judah for a moment and feel the force of this poem. The people of Jerusalem lived in a city, but their lives were coupled more closely to land and livestock than we think we are today. In this poem Habakkuk progresses through various aspects of life coming unglued, a progressive desolation of all of life from its joyful delicacies down to the very things without which we would die. Let me write a poem for us that describes in modern terms what the ancient reader would hear.

Though Baskin Robbins should close, there be no wine at the party and nothing safe to drink, there be no gas in the car, no job, no medicine for our illnesses, no clothes for our children and no food left anywhere for us to eat...yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will take joy in the God of my salvation.

Do you feel that? He is saying that if everything in life becomes chaos, all comforts, all joy, all things are wrecked and ruined...he will rejoice. What has happened to this prophet during this vision he received from God. He begins with questions and complaints before God and he ends in worship. I think there is something profound that happened *in him* which we need to understand.

### *The Uncertainty of Circumstances*

All of our lives are a series of choices and events, relationships and changes. As much as we like to think we can control it all we just can’t. We do have a huge part to play in the way things go in our lives and our choices do shape our reality. Yet we must remember we do not control all things—in fact attempting to do so is a great burden and usually ends up jacking up people around you. Even in light of this truth we are so prone to try and find our deepest joys in our circumstances. Now don’t get me wrong, I love certain circumstances in my life and consider them deep blessings from God. I love what I do, I love my family, I like having decent health, I love laughing with friends at Cross Corner Bar and Grill, and I really enjoy listening to podcasts on my iPod. Yet all of these things are not guarantees in life. It all will some day pass away. The great Christian philosopher and theologian Augustine of Hippo<sup>1</sup> once wrestled with where we could find our supreme good, our greatest joy in life. His line of thought was that our hope, our greatest good, cannot be found in this shipwrecked world of suffering. If we place our hope in the good of our health, it can be lost. If our greatest hope is in our wealth, the value of our 401k, this too can be easily lost. If our hope is placed in the good of home and family, loved ones too can be lost and even taken from us. If our hope is placed in safety and security, our world is one where people are conquered and stuff is plundered. Our supreme good would have to be found in another place than in this current shipwrecked and fallen age. Indeed, desire and attachment placed in temporal things and circumstances is an unsure love which can lead to despair and suffering. Ephesians teaches me that deceitful desires are part of our sinful nature and 1 John is very clear that the desires of the flesh, the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions—are not from the Father but are from the world. In placing our ultimate hope in the things of this world we could never write the poem which flowed out from Habakkuk’s walk with God. He had an anchor for his soul’s joy which was of a different sort and it was based in the constancy of God.

### *The Constancy of Jesus*

In James Montgomery Boice’s excellent commentary on the prophecy of Habakkuk, he reminds us of the great promises of God. In reflecting on God’s promises he wrote the following:

God’s mighty past acts in history [and I would add, our stories] amply demonstrate that he is *able* to save those who look to him in faith. But he has *promised* to save his people and therefore *will* save them. The God who makes promises stands by his promises. The God who makes oaths keeps them.<sup>2</sup>

He then goes on to quote some of the great promises of Jesus to each of his followers—I’ll share them here as well for your own meditation:

**Matthew 6:25-34 (ESV)** <sup>25</sup>“Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? <sup>26</sup>Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? <sup>27</sup>And

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which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? <sup>28</sup>And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, <sup>29</sup>yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. <sup>30</sup>But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? <sup>31</sup>Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ <sup>32</sup>For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. <sup>33</sup>But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. <sup>34</sup>“Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

**John 14:1-3 (ESV)** <sup>1</sup>“Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. <sup>2</sup>In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? <sup>3</sup>And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.

**John 14:25-27 (ESV)** <sup>25</sup>“These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. <sup>26</sup>But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. <sup>27</sup>Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.

**Matthew 28:18-20 (ESV)** <sup>18</sup>And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup>Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup>teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

**Hebrews 13:5-6 (ESV)** <sup>5</sup>Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” <sup>6</sup>So we can confidently say, “The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?”

I would be amiss if we did not transition away from God’s promises to us, to the very treasure of the gospel...namely God himself. Habakkuk could have no expectations of coming temporal blessing – of figs, flocks or 401ks. Yet he tells us he will take *joy in the God of my Salvation*. Too many times we get caught loving the gifts more than the giver. Too many times when the gifts are not present we forget that we still have Jesus himself with us. John Piper in his recent book, *God is the Gospel* brings us a great reminder of that wonderful treasure for unsinkable joy.

When I say that *God is the Gospel* I mean that the highest, best, final, decisive good of the gospel, without which no other gifts would be good, is the glory of God in the face of Christ revealed for our everlasting enjoyment.<sup>3</sup>

Habakkuk ends the entire book by sending his song and poetry to the musicians for he knew that it was time to sing. God had spoken, God had revealed himself in sovereign, faithful glory. Habakkuk would live by faith and demonstrate that with a song in his heart. Even in sorrow, the soul that gazes upon the beauty of God will be able to sing. Inversion—as we continue to seek our lives and satisfaction in the goodness and greatness of God we will be ever more free to serve others in his name. To enjoy telling others about the Jesus that saves our butts from sin, death and hell, to enjoy loving kids and families in need, to enjoy serving on Thursday night Gathering teams, to welcome strangers, to be in and lead community groups, to give some of our vacation time to take the gospel to other countries, to walk obediently with God in the midst of a flood of temptations, and to become men and women who change the world. Yes, only with Jesus as our treasure will we be able to live upside down lives which overcome evil with good.

Jesus has a mission before us, it is costly, it is wonderful, it requires our lives. Yet in the middle of it all we will never lose the greatest treasure which is eternal – our reconciled relationship with God who purchased us through the death, burial and resurrection of his own Son. This God, the Father who ordained us to be rescued by Jesus, the Son who enacted and obediently took the cup of God’s wrath on himself for our sins, the indwelling Spirit who comforts us and gives us power to serve...this God, never forsakes his kids. So with our good friend Habakkuk, I call on you to scream out: YET I WILL REJOICE! And then put your hands to some kingdom work alongside your friends.

Never forget the lessons he has taught us in the Old School—we will need them as we journey in the way of Jesus on mission or him in this world.

Your brother and pastor,



### Notes:

1. Richard N. Bosley and Martin Tweedale, eds., *Basic Issues in Medieval Philosophy*, 1999 Reprint ed. (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 1997). 512-518.
2. James Montgomery Boice, *The Minor Prophets*, 2 vols., vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006). 432—Emphasis in original
3. John Piper, *God is the Gospel*, (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2005) 13. Emphasis in original

