

August 3, 2025  
Return: Habakkuk's Prayer  
Habakkuk 3:16-19  
Vernon Advent Christian Church

Community Groups:

Purpose Statement:

Community Groups function as a multi-generational expression of the larger body of VACC and are centered around the Word of God, Fellowship, the Breaking of Bread and Prayer. These weekly groups exist to equip believers to grow in Christ, cultivate unity through meaningful relationships, accountability, and the use of our gifts and to provide witness to friends and neighbors by modeling the Gospel of Jesus Christ in community.

“And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.” – Acts 2:42

Introduction... Today is our last day in the book of Habakkuk. We have been following the prophets journey of doubt and questions of whether God still cares about what's going on in the world and if his judgements are fair? And so, today’s message marks the end of the journey for Habakkuk, as we will look at Habakkuk's final prayer and concluding thoughts.

Commentator J. Vernon McGee said the Book of Habakkuk, “begins with a question mark and closes with an exclamation point.” And as we close out the book today, I think you will agree with this description of the book.

These last few verses of Habakkuk that we are going to be looking at today, make one of the strongest statements of faith you will find in all of Scripture. It brings the book to a fitting end as we find ourselves discovering the truth along with Habakkuk as he lived it out and wrote it.

You see, the book of Habakkuk is all about faith in the one true God. In fact, we saw this in one of the key verses of the book in ch. 2:4: “The righteous will live by faith.” We live in a time where the most popular preachers and best-selling books on faith seem to be the ones that tell you how to prosper, succeed and live the good life. And you know what, it’s easy to put your faith in God when you are prospering, when life is going well and everything according to your plans.

But the book of Habakkuk challenges you to put your faith in God even during the worst times. As we'll see today, when Habakkuk reached the end of this journey, he had moved from a place of doubting God to a place of trusting God no matter what.

God revealed to Habakkuk that Judah, his homeland, was about to be invaded, destroyed and, its survivors, taken away. Habakkuk and his people would lose everything that they had built up over the years, everything they had worked for. It would all be gone. That is a whole lot different than trusting God even though you got a traffic ticket, or even though you had a bad day at work. This book challenges us to learn to trust God no matter what.

Let's put the question in the same terms Habakkuk faced. If tomorrow, you lost everything. Your home, your livelihood, possibly even your family, how would that affect your faith in God? Is your faith strong enough to stand up to that kind of a trial? Could you still rejoice in the Lord if you lost everything? Is your faith strong enough to trust God no matter what?

That is the place to which the book of Habakkuk brings us at the end of ch.3. How do you remain steadfast in your faith in God during the worst of times? How do we trust in God no matter what? Let's look at these closing verses together and see what we can learn for the strengthening of our own faith. If you are able, please stand with me as I read the word of God this morning from Habakkuk's prayer in ch. 3:16-19. [Read]

Ch.3 opens with a prayer of Habakkuk in response to God's response to his questions in ch.1, where the prophet begins by pleading with God to act in the present like he has in the past, bringing down corrupt nations. "Renew your work in our days" (Hab. 3:2).

What follows is a description a powerful and terrifying appearance of God through clouds, fire, and an earthquake. It's very similar to the appearance of God at Mount Sinai in Exodus 19-20, as well as, later to Elijah in 1Kings 19 when God was not in these things and then Elijah heard "a still small voice." The point is, when the Creator shows up to confront human evil, it will get everyone's attention.

Habakkuk continues in the chapter by describing the future defeat of evil among the nations as a future exodus. Just like God came as a warrior and split the sea in his battle against Pharaoh, Habakkuk says that God will once more bring his judgment down on the "head of the evil house." Pharaoh, like Babylon, serves as a symbol of all wicked nations.

But, at the same time, when God confronts evil, he will "save his people, and his anointed one" (Hab. 3:13), a reference to the coming king from the line of David. And through him, God will, once and for all, defeat evil and bring down the Pharaohs and Babylons of the world, bringing justice to his people and to his world.

It's this promise that enables Habakkuk to end the book with such hopeful praise. Even if the world is falling apart from food shortages, drought, war, or whatever, he will choose to trust and take joy in the promises of God. Again, how do we trust in God no matter what?

And in these last few verses, we see in Habakkuk's words how he did just that. The first example the prophet gives to us is to wait patiently for the LORD, even when you are afraid. Look at vs. 16 where Habakkuk writes, [Read]

God had told Habakkuk about the coming invasion by the Babylonians. God had described the arrogance, violence, and cruelty of these invaders in great detail in the previous chapters. God also told Habakkuk about the great and awesome judgments he would bring upon Babylon and upon all the nations of the earth that refuse to submit to God. Habakkuk may even have seen all this in a vision.

And so, Habakkuk is terrified at what will soon take place, and rightfully so. He is afraid. His heart pounds in his chest, his lips quiver, he feels physically weak, hardly able to stand. Habakkuk wasn't just dealing with the possibility of attack on his country, but with the reality and certainty of it. He was deathly afraid, and his fear affected him on a deep and even physical level.

How do you deal with extreme fear? What do you do when fear grips you in such a way that your heart is pounding and your legs are weak? Do you try to simply think positively? Do you try deep breathing? Just try and push it out of your mind, pretend like it isn't happening? How do you exercise faith in God during the worst of times? Habakkuk says to wait patiently for God, even when you are afraid. Look at the second half of vs. 16, [Read]

Again, God told Habakkuk the Babylonians were going to invade. It was going to happen. But God also assured Habakkuk that he would judge the Babylonians for their sin, and that he would ultimately deliver his people. And so, in the midst of his fears, Habakkuk chooses to wait patiently for God and his timing.

The phrase “wait patiently” comes from a Hebrew word meaning “to rest, or to settle down and remain.” It is the same word we find in the Ten Commandments where God tells us to rest on the Sabbath Day. It is the same word we find in the Book of Joshua where God promised to give the Israelites rest from their enemies in the land. Here Habakkuk determines to wait patiently during this time of trial, to rest himself in the Lord.

Elsewhere in scripture, God promises to give us his peace when we give him your worries and fears. Philippians 4:6-7 says: “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” And, again, Peter says in 1 Pet. 5:7 “Cast all your cares on him, for he cares for you.” It's the best trade we can ever make, which comes along with our salvation, our worries and fears for his peace. But that's easier said than done...

So, how do we remain steadfast in our faith during the worst of times? First of all, we need to learn to wait patiently for the Lord, even when you are afraid and rest ourselves in God.

And then a second example we see in Habakkuk's words is to rejoice in the LORD, even when everything in life seems to be going wrong. Look at vs 17-18, [Read]

This is such a wonderful passage to memorize and to meditate on. These verses represent one of the strongest expressions of faith you will find in the whole Bible as Habakkuk determines to rejoice in God even when everything else in life goes wrong.

Habakkuk gives three scenarios here. The first scenario is the fig tree that does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines. Think of spring time, when all the flowers begin to bud and the trees begin to sprout their leaves. Even though it is just a blossom, just a bud, it is a tangible sign that the fruit and the flowers are coming. But in this scenario, there are no signs for the future. The fig tree does not bud. There are no grapes on the vine. There is no visible sign that these things will ever come to be. And so, the blossoms on the fig tree and the grapes forming on the vine refer to those things you are trusting for the future.

Do you have hopes and dreams for the future, but no visible signs that they will ever come to fruition? Do you ever feel like saying, “God, please just give me a sign, some type of hope that things are going to change, something to hold on to?” Then you know how Habakkuk felt. And Habakkuk would tell you, when you have nothing to hold on to for the future, hold on to God, and that is enough. “Though I have no visible sign of hope for the future, nothing tangible that I can see or touch or grasp, yet I will rejoice in the Lord. I will be joyful in God my Savior.” Habakkuk says, “Trust God no matter what.”

The second scenario is when the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food. The olive crop and the fields refer to those things you are trusting in the present. And in this scenario what you are trusting lets you down. The olive crop fails. The fields produce no food. They disappoint you. In fact, the word translated “fails” in this verse is a word that means “to deceive or to disappoint”

The idea is this. You have planted your fields, you have worked the land, tended the crops, and now that it is finally time for harvest, and the crops fail. The fields produce no food. It was all a lie. It was all a deception. All that work, all that effort, and it all comes to nothing.

What do you do when all that you are counting on in the present suddenly comes crumbling down around you? What do you do when you suffer bitter disappointments in life? Habakkuk says, “Trust God no matter what.” “Though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, yet I will rejoice in the Lord. I will be joyful in God my Savior.”

The third scenario is when there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls. The sheep and cattle refer to those things you are trusting from the past. They represent what you have in reserve. In this scenario, you have no reserves to fall back on. There are no sheep in the pen. There are no cattle in the stalls.

What do you do when you have nothing to fall back on? Habakkuk would tell you, fall back on God, and he will hold you up. “Though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior.”

It is easy to trust in God when the fig tree is budding and there are grapes on the vines. It is easy to trust God when the olive crop succeeds and the fields are producing food. It is easy to trust God when you have plenty of sheep and cattle in reserve. But are you really trusting in God at those times? Or are you merely trusting in the things that you have?

Think about Job. This was exactly the question Satan asked God about Job. “Does Job trust you because he trusts you, or does he trust you because you have blessed him?” Job passed the test when God removed the blessing, and Job continued to trust him no matter what. Habakkuk challenges us with the same question. Do you really trust God, or do you only trust him when life is going the way you want it to?

Habakkuk says, “Though you have no visible hope for the future, and what you were trusting in the present has let you down, and you have no reserves from the past to fall back on, even if that were the case, you can still rejoice in the Lord, still be joyful in God.” Why? Because he is God your Savior. He has promised to deliver you in his time, and he has never let the righteous fall. How do you remain steadfast in your faith during the worst of times? Choose to rejoice in God, even when everything in life seems to be going wrong.

And finally, we see a third example from Habakkuk's words and that is to find strength in the LORD, even when you are down. Look at vs. 19: [Read]

Habakkuk had learned to find his strength in God, not in his own resources or ability. He rightly declared that his strength was not in fig trees or vines or fields or flocks, but only in the LORD God. Habakkuk was about to go through some hard times. The thought of it scared him so much that his heart pounded and his legs trembled, as he described in vs. 16. Yet as he rejoiced in God in the midst of difficult circumstances, he found new strength from God to deal with the trial at hand.

What is this strength like that God gives you? Habakkuk thought of the deer running about on the high hills, never losing a step and never falling. More than that, the deer positively dance and leap on the hills — they are full of life and joy. So the prophet proclaimed, “God will set my steps that firmly and lively also. As I trust in Him, He will not allow me to slip or fall, and I will do more than merely plod along — I will skip about with life and joy.” Do you long to enter the higher places of fellowship with God? Then find your strength in him alone. Trust God to lift you up when you are down.

How do you remain steadfast in your faith during the worst of times? Habakkuk gives us the example of waiting patiently for the Lord, even when you are afraid, of choosing to rejoice in the LORD, even when everything in life seems to be going wrong, and of finding strength in Lord, even when you are down.

We have reached the end of our journey together through the book of Habakkuk. If we're honest, Habakkuk's journey mirrors our own journey through life. We saw that Habakkuk began his journey with a lot of questions: “Does God care? Is God fair? But instead of running away from God with his questions, Habakkuk kept bringing his questions to God and finding the answers that he needed.

Habakkuk began his journey in the valley of doubt, and he ended his journey scaling the heights with God with feet like a deer. It is a beautiful journey and one that is open to everyone who will come honestly to God with their questions and seek him with all of their heart. As God promises in Jeremiah 29:13: “You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.”

And so, wherever you may be in your own personal journey from doubt to faith, let me encourage you, keep seeking God. Keep coming to him with your doubts and with your questions. Come to God through Jesus his Son, knowing that God loves you so much he sent his Son to die for you.

May God help us to learn the beautiful lessons that he has recorded for us in the book of Habakkuk. Let us pray and prepare our hearts for communion.