

Satisfaction through Salvation

Habakkuk 3:1-19

Tim Nixon

How many of you saw the movie Rocky?

Do you remember the little girl in the green jacket standing at the top of the steps with the 100 other children? Did you ever notice her? Remember in the movie when she comes running up with all the kids? Do you remember her in her green jacket? No?

But I bet you every time she watches the movie she sees herself. And when her friends are over she says, "Here, here is my part – come watch"

And probably the first time she watched it in the theatre she was with her Mom and her mom said something like, "Oh, honey you ran so well sweetheart."

What if she walked around and said, "I'm starring in a movie. What movie? Rocky." People would say, "What are you talking about. That movie wasn't about you. It was about Rocky Balboa – the Italian Stallion. And how he lasted 15 rounds against the world champion." It's all about Rocky!! Someone would finally have to grab this girl and hold her and say one word to her...EXTRA. You are an extra. You are not the star of Rocky. This isn't about you. You had a 5 second scene when you run up the stairs with 100 other kids – screamed Rocky, Rocky five times and it was over. That's all it was!

And what if the girl still insists, it's all about me? I bring that up because I believe there are people in the world and in the church that are more delusional than she is. Where you think this movie is all about you. That life is all about you. That life revolves around you and you don't realize your place in this movie. I think Habakkuk started out there.

You see – this movie – from cover –to-cover... not about you. It's about God. Everything in this book is about God.

In the beginning – who

And he did what? What were you doing during that time? Seriously – where were you? When he created the heavens and earth and said – this is good. Was he talking to you?

And then the movie goes on.... And then the people start to rebel against God and do the things he hates – so God floods the whole place. He says, “Look what I do here. You won’t like me when I’m mad.” You see the flood isn’t the story of Noah. It’s about God. And I’ll take this little man and his family and I’ll repopulate the earth with them.

Then he takes an old man Abraham and his old wife Sarah – and says, “I’m going to make a huge nation out of them. And I’m going to bless them so much.” The only problem is Abram is 100 and Sarah is 90 and they have no kids. But God says, “Watch what I do in this scene. I’ll have the 90 yr old women have a baby. And I can do that because I am writing the script and I can make it happen. I can do anything!”

Then he starts loving these people as they start multiplying. And the story of Joseph – not about Joseph, but about God.

Then the Egyptians enslave God’s people, so God takes little Moses and says, “Watch what I can do here...

Then I will send people called prophets to tell them the future things that will happen – so they realize I know everything – I am the main character – I wrote the script. I know what will happen in the next scene.

And then in the climax of the story, I am going to show off my love. The people have seen my power and my judgment. They have seen my ability to create, my ability to punish. But now I will show them my love like never before. In this movie – where all the people are rebelling against him – he sends his son. This is the ultimate act of love!

Now let me ask you a question? At what point in there did you become the star? You’ll have to tell me, because I missed it. This whole script, everything from cover to cover is designed to bring God glory. And we look at it all and say, “Wow. He is awesome. What else matters in life?” Who cares about any of the other characters – it is all about him. And Tim Nixon is a 5 second blip in the movie, where I run up here in front of you and shout, “Jesus, Jesus, Jesus” and die. At some point I have to get that in my head – that’s all I am.

Until you get that foundational concept – you will, like Habakkuk, be so frustrated in life.

There are many people who walk around in the world and in the church that are more delusional than the little girl in the green jacket. You want God to be your best supporting actor because you still think this movie is about you. You see there is only one movie being played right now – and it’s not

the movie of Tim Nixon. There is no movie of Tim Nixon. It's how God chose to take Anglo baby number 3 billion 32 and he says, "Watch what I do with this one." And someday my scene will end and I'll stand before God and he will ask, "Did you glorify me? Did you run up those steps and scream my name?"

We have seen this confusion in the first two chapters of Habakkuk.

In chapter one we saw:

- Habakkuk is perplexed. How long will I cry out to you for help God, but you don't answer.
- God does answer with, "Things are going to get worse before they get better." In fact, you are not going to believe how I answer your prayer.
- God tells Habakkuk he is going to send the Chaldeans to sweep in and take Israel captive. he is going to use the most horrible people to judge the people of God.

In chapter two we saw:

- Habakkuk then moves himself from the ground to a tower
 - What do you do in the tower? Look for something coming; look for what is happening all around you. When you are a watchman in the tower you are expectant. You expect something to happen. You are anxiously awaiting something to happen.
- Then God tells Habakkuk he will also judge the Chaldeans after he uses them to judge Israel.
- We saw in chapter 2 the main theme of the book of Habakkuk in 2:4

This evening we will conclude with Chapter 3

A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet, according to Shigionoth.

2 O Lord, I have heard the report of you,
and your work, O Lord, do I fear.

In the midst of the years revive it;
in the midst of the years make it known;
in wrath remember mercy.

3 God came from Teman,
and the Holy One from Mount Paran. *Selah*

His splendor covered the heavens,
and the earth was full of his praise.

4 His brightness was like the light;
rays flashed from his hand;
and there he veiled his power.

5 Before him went pestilence,

and plague followed at his heels.

6 He stood and measured the earth;
he looked and shook the nations;
then the eternal mountains were scattered;
the everlasting hills sank low.
His were the everlasting ways.

7 I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction;
the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble.

8 Was your wrath against the rivers, O Lord?
Was your anger against the rivers,
or your indignation against the sea,
when you rode on your horses,
on your chariot of salvation?

9 You stripped the sheath from your bow,
calling for many arrows. *Selah*
You split the earth with rivers.

10 The mountains saw you and writhed;
the raging waters swept on;
the deep gave forth its voice;
it lifted its hands on high.

11 The sun and moon stood still in their place
at the light of your arrows as they sped,
at the flash of your glittering spear.

12 You marched through the earth in fury;
you threshed the nations in anger.

13 You went out for the salvation of your people,
for the salvation of your anointed.

You crushed the head of the house of the wicked,
laying him bare from thigh to neck. *Selah*

14 You pierced with his own arrows the heads of his warriors,
who came like a whirlwind to scatter me,
rejoicing as if to devour the poor in secret.

15 You trampled the sea with your horses,
the surging of mighty waters.

16 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.
17 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,
18 yet I will rejoice in the Lord;
I will take joy in the God of my salvation.
19 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.

This chapter is a great prayer put to music. It is similar to the prayer we sometimes sing prior to a sermon, "Show us Christ". It is a classic example of prayer.

Habakkuk's attitude in his prayer is simply this: God I don't understand everything, I don't understand why You let Israel go, I don't understand why You're bringing the Chaldeans to judge them, I don't understand why You're going to wait to judge the Chaldeans after that, I don't understand any of the things.

But I know one thing God: You're the God that is righteous, you're the God that's eternal, you're the God that never makes a mistake, you're the God that hates sin, you're the God that never does anything wrong and I'll stand on that and praise you.

So we have here a prayer that is also a hymn that is also a beautiful piece of Hebrew poetry. We see that in verse 1. And like the Lord's Prayer, this is a wonderful model for prayer.

And then in verse 2 Habakkuk begins his prayer, but not like most of us would probably pray. What do I mean by that? He is standing in the midst of an absolute dilemma. He is afraid. He is afraid for himself. He's afraid for Israel. He doesn't understand what God is doing, though he understands that God is always right.

But, he does not ask for deliverance, he does not ask for ease, he does not pray that God should spare Israel, he doesn't pray any of these things because he knows that God must judge.

What he does pray is that God will do His work. What a tremendous truth. He knows how to pray and he is not praying selfishly. He is praying singularly that God's work come to fulfillment.

Can you or I look at the problems around us and the problems in our lives and the problems in our world and say God I don't care about those things, all I care about, God, is that whatever happens to me or anybody else that You be glorified?

And then at the end of verse 2 Habakkuk adds "in wrath remember mercy" He knows God is going to judge because God must judge sin. And he knows neither he nor Israel have a leg to stand on in their own righteousness. But he does know that God has always shown mercy following judgment. So he simply says God, be yourself. He remembers God's mercy.

Verse 3-4 reminds him of the exodus and God's people at Mount Sinai.

And then in verse 5-7 He's saying in sweeping terms that God controls history and God has put down nations when God wanted to and Israel has been victorious - possibly speaking of the plagues against Egypt.

Verse 9 shows that God's bow is ready to defend his people.

In Verse 10 you see an inference of the Red Sea. And here you have in Hebrew poetry the idea of water sweeping up, which is exactly what happened when they crossed the Red Sea, the water swept up on both sides.

He is remembering the history of God's glory as the God of his people

In verse 11 you have a reference to Joshua 10.

"At that time Joshua spoke to the Lord in the day when the Lord gave the Amorites over to the sons of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel,

"Sun, stand still at Gibeon,
and moon, in the Valley of Aijalon."

13 And the sun stood still, and the moon stopped,
until the nation took vengeance on their enemies.

The sun stopped in the midst of heaven and did not hurry to set for about a whole day. 14
There has been no day like it before or since, when the Lord heeded the voice of a man, for the Lord fought for Israel."

Then in verses 12 to 15, he lists the many ways that God has defeated His enemies.

What a tremendous truth.

Now verse 16. And I want to take a moment here.

Habakkuk is honest enough to say, "God I trust you, I love you, I believe in you, you're the right God, you'll do everything that's true, just and holy, you never make a mistake, I know all that, but I'm scared." He was afraid.

Do you remember what Jesus said to some sleeping disciples in the garden while he was praying? He said to them, "The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak." We live in a constant tension between the spirit and the flesh. Romans 9:2 says this: Paul talking, "I have continual sorrow and heaviness of heart."

But how can that be from the man who preached to the Philippians, "Rejoice always, again I say rejoice." Paul had circumstances that brought tears to his eyes. He had circumstances in life that were hard to bear, but you know something, those circumstances on the outside never touched the inside relationship to God.

And may I dare make this very personal tonight:

If you have the same pastor or pastors for many years, and they are real pastors, you will see a change in them the longer they pastor. Not because they are getting older, but because the burden of caring for your souls effects them. As they see your hurt and pain and disappointment, as they pray with you - and for you and counsel you - these things have an accumulating effect on them. But Habakkuk's circumstances and Paul's circumstances and your pastor's circumstances don't corrupt the concept of their relationship to God.

Don't let your circumstances corrupt your concept of your relationship to God.

- Life brings us problems.
- Habakkuk was perplexed by his problems.
- But, he wasn't at all perplexed in his relation to God.

Habakkuk has moved from perplexity and anxiety through a process of questioning and doubt and now reaches a satisfaction because he recognizes his salvation.

And the outcome of it all is reflected in verse 17.

This is language of the covenant God had with his people. And the promise is that if Israel was faithful to God, that:

- The fig tree will blossom
- The vine will yield much fruit
- The olive trees will be full of olives
- The livestock will multiply

And we see now that Habakkuk has gotten to a place where he says, I don't care about the blessings and I don't care about the gifts, because I possess the one who blesses and the one who gives.

This is what God has done in Habakkuk's life over these days, weeks, months – however long it has been.

Now, in light of that, what should we do?

- How does this intersect with your life?
- What do you do with this tomorrow morning when you show up at the office, or plant, or school?
- What does this look like around the dinner table?

Dr. Helen Roseveare was an English Christian missionary to the Congo from 1953 to 1973. She stayed through the hostile and dangerous political instability in the early 1960s. In 1964 she was taken prisoner by rebel forces and she remained a prisoner for five months, enduring beatings and raping's – left within an inch of death. And in the aftermath of that **awful** experience, Helen Roseveare had this overwhelming sense that God was saying to her, **“Will you trust me in this and give thanks even if I never tell you why?”** And like Habakkuk, Helen Roseveare came to the point in her life where, despite God allowing this to happen to her, Christ became the principle joy of her soul.

This is what God is doing in our lives. Laboring within and without us to bring us to the place, where like Habakkuk we will say,

“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,
18 yet I will rejoice in the LORD;
I will take joy in the God of my salvation.
19 GOD, the Lord, is my strength;
he makes my feet like the deer's;
he makes me tread on my high places

God is committed to that in you.

We can trust God in treacherous/high places. Habakkuk has gone from the slippery, icy, frozen lake – to the surefootedness of a deer on the mountain side.

Many years ago my grandparents took a mule ride down into the Grand Canyon. My grandmother describes the beginning of it as the most frightening experience of her life. She would look over and not be able to see the narrow ledge on which the mule was walking. Yet she quickly became confident that her mule could carry her with a surefootedness that she would not have had on her own two feet.

Our faith empowers us to live in the higher places with God – despite our many setbacks.

Habakkuk has been on quite a faith journey:

- He has prayed about his people and his country
- He has prayed about the Chaldeans
- He has questioned God
- He has been called to faith
- He has trusted – and as far as life goes he has conquered, if this is his song.

When you have your eyes focused on Jesus, there is hope. I have seen Christians of all types agree with Habakkuk, haven't you?

I know people who have:

- Gone through the death of a child, but they trust in Christ
- Lost their jobs, but they trust in Christ
- Have been abandoned by their spouse, but they trust in Christ
- Have been rejected from graduate school, but they trust in Christ
- Watched their parents struggle with Alzheimer's, but they trust in Christ
- Lose their homes, but they trust in Christ
- Been abandoned by friends, but they trust in Christ

These people don't go away. They are like Peter in John 6 after Jesus called himself the Bread of Life,

“66 After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. 67 So Jesus said to the Twelve, “Do you want to go away as well?” 68 Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, 69 and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.”

We can rejoice, not because life is easy, but because of Christ. We rejoice in him. We glorify him.

Who has held the oceans in His hands?
Who has numbered every grain of sand?
Kings and nations tremble at His voice
All creation rises to rejoice

Who has given counsel to the Lord?
Who can question any of His words?
Who can teach the One who knows all things?
Who can fathom all His wondrous deeds?

Who has felt the nails upon His hands?
Bearing all the guilt of sinful man
God eternal, humbled to the grave
Jesus, Savior, risen now to reign

Behold our God seated on His throne
Come, let us adore Him
Behold our King—nothing can compare
Come, let us adore Him