

The prayer of Habakkuk - Selah

Part 1

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[00:00:00] Wir gehen zu dem 3. Kapitel des Hebrews, Hebrews 2.

Verse 3, a word, one word in the middle of verse 3 of the chapter 3 of Habakkuk, Selah.

Again, in verse 9, in the middle of the verse, one word, Selah.

[00:01:09] Verse 13, the last word in the verse, Selah.

Verse 18, Yes, I will rejoice in the Lord, I will rejoice in the Lord with my salvation.

The Lord God is my strength, and He makes my feet like ironsheets.

He will make me walk upon my high places, to the chief singer of my stringed instruments.

The deep desire that I have sent to God in my heart is that to take you into this musical, to listen to the divine leader of the orchestra, to seek to learn the title, the skillful manner [00:02:07] in which he plucks his instrument, and produces for the heart of the blessed God, that which is acceptable to Him.

This word Selah, as you probably know, means false or silent.

It's been tortured and squeezed and torn, but we get no squeak out of it. It means false.

It means quiet.

It means silent.

And three times in this prayer of Habakkuk, you get the expression Selah.

Three times the student, if I might say so, is called to be quiet and to meditate.

But I say to God, you know, literally now, or sitting down in the presence of the blessed God, and meditating upon some tiny portion perhaps, or even as the brother said to me [00:03:03] yesterday, upon one word.

And find the rich providence that the Spirit of God has hidden, so to speak, behind the word itself.

Habakkuk was a saint of God, just like you are, just like I am.

He lived in the time of times that we live in. He lived very close on the main verge of captivity, when judgment was coming. And you and I live on the very first bigger moment when God with his people will sweep this world in judgment.

But before that, you and I, we're going to be like him because we shall see him as he is. And in that blessed place, beloved saints of God, there will be no tuning the instruments. They will all be perfectly tuned, and they will all be under the divine control, the blessed control of the chief musician.

You remember, it cropped up yesterday, the chief musician. [00:04:04] You remember this afternoon, we were introduced to the call of David's dancing. You recall here, with all of the chief singers. God had a song, beloved saints of God.

And if you'd asked the jailer who was linked in these last verses, last verses to Habakkuk, he would have probably said to you, I know who you're speaking about. You're speaking about those two men whose feet I tossed in the socks, whose back I whipped with the lashes, whose tongue I kissed to the cross. That's it.

Then he would know immediately what you meant if he talked about producing joy out of some difficult and trying circumstance.

And this prophet, this Habakkuk, alone here, speaking to himself, that's what I think is delightful, speaking to himself, taking your heart and mind along difficult ways and hard passages, and all the time saying to us, now again, now, stop here, meditate upon what [00:05:02] is past.

And then again, stop here, meditate upon what the blessed God has done.

Or say, stop here, and meditate upon what the blessed God is going to do.

On one occasion we recall that he was told to write the reading, write it plainly, that he who runs may read.

What it means is this.

Write it so plainly that you and I can sit down in the presence of the blessed God and read it in such a formative way that your heart and mind immediately march out and we have spiritual energy and power to walk along.

It's not a question of being able to run along and words are so large that you can see them as you write.

You must read the words before you write. And when you read the words, they're calling you out with such, you're then able to step out along the path with which the blessed God is made to appear. I doubt not the vision has reference to what was brought up this afternoon, the knowledge [00:06:01] of the glory of the blessed God that is coming to this. But I'm not concerned at the moment at all about

the quality of Habakkuk. I'm drawing your attention, for God is saying to the Lord, to this musical song that closes the book.

There's only one other composition, Mark, that's Psalm 7. In the singular, there, in the plural, here, we have a Hebrew word. I'm not even quoting that to you. As you're ready to read Psalm 7, you'll discover that it begins in prayer and praise of God and it finishes in grace.

You'll notice that this chapter begins in prayer to God and it goes through all kinds of exercises, but it finishes in praise to the blessed God. I don't, for a moment, for God is saying to God, imagine that I could carry your thoughts and your affections along the high earth upon which the reading finished this afternoon. But I do see this, for God is saying to God, that you and I can be greatly helped to step [00:07:02] up higher and higher and higher as we consider the ways that the teacher teaches us the music of heaven.

I know little enough about music. I know the most difficult string on the violin which I used to try to play was the E string. And I know that it broke more than any other string on the head. And I know this, that the E string was the highest string, struck the highest note. And I know this, that the high notes above the five major lines of the mezzo, that go soaring up often up in music, can be reached only on the E string.

The string that steps the most easily is the string that produces the most charming and pious and most innovative music.

Do you see, for God is saying to God, why you and I need a chief musician?

In London, on one occasion, a world-renowned leader of an orchestra was putting the orchestra [00:08:06] to their faces.

It was only a practice.

He set the ball in motion, and a celebrated man, a canoe, with just a little wave of his body, bent over and off he let it go.

And all of a sudden he said, Stop!

Where's the piccolo? Where's the piccolo?

What, that weedy, piping, little wind instrument? You don't tell me that the chief musician, the leader of an orchestra, missed an off-string piccolo?

Well, not here, as he did. Because his ear was attuned to the music. He knew exactly what he was after. He was drawing it out of the orchestra, and it was suddenly missing. Piccolo.

You and I may be near an off-string piccolo, but if our praise is missing, the chief musician understands.

He knows.

And he seeks a reason for it. And it might be he's about to tighten up the E-string. [00:09:02] He's given a snack, for love's sake, to God under his terrible manipulation. He lays nothing upon us that is greater than we can bear. But he will tighten it, tighten it up. Things will become taut at times, but it'll never break. We have this confidence in him, it'll never break. What he's doing is, is tightening it up in order that he will produce the music that is delightful and pleasing to his ear. Your heart and mine desire nothing better than this, than to bring something to the heart of the blessed Christ, whom we know as the exalted man in the glory of God. And if your heart and mine, as a man of piccolos, can join in the vast universal chorus, in the light of the great musician, the chief musician, the leader of the faith of his people in the assembly.

This is called, by various names, various songs and so on.

I like to stick to the old English word, the understanding, energy. [00:10:03] You all have to know, certainly the young do, what energy is.

Great energy, written in a church novel, remember?

Woeful contribute to the great, of his death they said, a rather written great energy, than won the battle of the height of Abraham. Yes, and energy will not be changed with God, it begins on a plate, you know. Energy's too great. They go through all kinds of twists and turns of speech, but they come out in triumph at the end.

That's what Solomon said in verse three.

That's what chapter three of Habakkuk does. It comes out in triumph at the end. It begins in verse one, with prayer being heard, and it ends, it turns to praise, as the master manipulation of the chief musician, tunes the strings to his own divine ear, and produces, in your heart and mine, a divine response, which his ear will go and catch [00:11:04] because his ear is aptly tuned to catch the music of heaven. What is your soul, my Lord, that is faithful to God? I'm only asking this during my affections and desires and your affections and desires. What do our hearts know about chemistry? We often turn to Luke 15, we see where the amendment begins. We know that the very source of the amendment is the Father himself. Ask the younger son why it is there's amendment in the house.

You know the answer that will be produced. He will talk to you about the Father. He will tell you about the kind of welcome he received. He will say he wasn't satisfied with that. He wasn't satisfied after he taught me his presence, and sat me down at his own table, and fed me upon his own float, and he taught me his own raiment. Tell me what God's done for you and me. Blessed be his holy name.

He fixed you up when you were nothing, as he did me, when we were in the mire and the dirt and the dust, and he fixed it up. [00:12:02] I say again, blessed be his holy name. And he's put us around Christmas.

He's set us down at his table. He's filled our hearts with joy, so that like David, we feel like dancing. We've described dancing upon this earth. Of course we do. It's not like a proper. But spiritually, we are not in a sense of God. The spirit of God will set your feet twinkling in my eyes. Use such a term. And you'll dance with the sense of divine in every limb of your soul, because the spirit of God will fill your heart with Christ. And God the Father delights in Christ, and he delights to see your heart occupied with Christ.

And the blessed Christ of God himself will take care of that, for your heart is reduced sooner or later. Some note of praise that is basically so. So if you're passing through difficult times and trials, I'm not anxious to press this line. But if you shouldn't be at this moment passing through difficulties and trials, could you just look upon it as this, just for once. Let me just say this. Grant the great musician, the chief musician, the chief singer, the leader, who has got [00:13:05] his hands sort of split on the key.

He's got the middle between his knees, and he's got his gentle, gentle hand on the key and touching the strings.

In order for him to tweak it and hear it, for him to stomp, just as I used to do as a boy, because I thought I got the right pitch. He knows exactly the right pitch. And he immediately stops with your heart what he's looking for. The tension will stop, but it will never break. The string, I assert again, it will never break in the competent, capable hands of the chief musician. We must hurry to the descent.

We've seen Seymour, we've seen what it means. I would encourage the younger brethren to sit down in the presence of God. I know they talk about service. I've been told quite recently on my gnostics, it was 60-70%, they go, I walk on a duck's [00:14:04] back, they say, no, it's just the Lord God, because in my heart I know that if you want to serve the blessed God, you've got to know him. If you want to talk about the precious Christ your God, you've got to go into his company. And if you don't go into his company, you've really not got much worth saying to him. No. And so as we recall, occasionally we'll say to you perhaps, Seymour, he said to his soul, Paul, he said, come aside with me and rest a while. He'll take you into his presence, and it might be a music room perhaps, and then he'll put you through the pages, so to speak. But what is in his heart is this. Again, I say, at the risk of defeating myself, what is in his heart is this, produced from your heart and mind, pure, clear, unadulterated, don't let it be secretive.

So the exercise that one may say shall begin in verse 16.

[00:15:02] What is done before, it is for instruction. At the very beginning, if you care to turn back, not to dwell upon it or to take note, at the very beginning you'll notice that the Spirit of God takes you back to the beginning, when there's any trouble at all. That's what he often does. He takes you right back to where things began. And the Spirit of God in this book takes us right back to the month from which the call is taken, and from which they began their journey, which would have lasted, I'm told, eleven days, but it lasted now, it lasted forty years. From the beginning, I think, of God.

And again and again I believe that God, I'm told, did with Abraham, send him back to the place he left.

He gets you back to the beginning. He gets you back to the place, perhaps, from which you deviated in some way when you stopped the whole service.

And he gets you back into a beautiful service for you. And he will bring out that which is dear and precious to his heart. [00:16:01] And then in Habakkuk, he takes you back to the beginning, right back to the one who came four things before me, to these and to Elizabeth. To take them in eleven days is completely promised. But there are incredible problems. They die in the wilderness. We don't want to perish in the wilderness without experiencing God, I mean spiritually, do we?

We want to be energetic, lively, active, but not necessarily always in service war, but God war.

If we put this before us, if we make this the very thing that is always and possibly before us, it is God that makes it. It is the man up there whom he's exalted. Let his feet be free.

Our hearts adore him. We follow his blessed feet. We hold him to have the right to the faith he has. And we hold him, as Habakkuk would hold him, as the only worthy one to come forth into the sea and spread wide the knowledge of the Lord.

Well, the exercises begin.

He's in good company, cannot remind me of anything. He joins Daniel and Job and John.

[00:17:02] Do you remember? It's very tremble, he said. Not to make a man tremble, is it? And he comes to the presence of blessed God and hear what he has to say. It may be very tremble, tremble, he said, but it was a good thing that was in view. There was rest in view, that is, rest in the day of trouble. There's a remarkable occasion, I think, in chapter one. As you will notice, after recounting some dire things that were going to fall, he suddenly said, well, I'll never ask again. That's it.

He turned to the blessed God, who was infallible, the one who's always the same, and found his sure resource in the blessed God himself. Everything might seem to be toppling onto every head, but there's one who stands secure, eternally to Habakkuk, and eternally to your heart and mine, and that blessed man is in the Lord.

Well, here, he passes through the exercises, and in verse 17, we find a marvelous surmounting of all the miseries, and all the problems, and all the trials that face him. [00:18:05] This is beautiful, beloved saints of God, because here is a saint, a common, ordinary saint like you and I, lifted above every circumstance in his heart. After passing before him and reviewing all the dreadful situation in which he finds himself, he turns to the blessed God and thanks him. How much worse could it be, beloved saints of God? We say things are getting worse and worse.

I believe that it has always been the tribe. I quite could conceive that Luther would have said, ah, what grand days they were in St.

Augustine's day. Or Wesley saying, what wonderful day it must have been to live with Luther. Or even great men of last century might, if they were untold in the Scriptures at least, say, ah, for all we've only been there with Wesley and seen the marvelous works of God, beloved saints of God.

This has been said before by a great statement, states man, the best is yet to be. [00:19:03] The best is yet to be.

All may be falling to Peter's unending hands, but you and I needn't back an idea, as we say, because it is in the hands of the blessed man of whom we've been pleading and whom our hearts adore, the man Christ Jesus, who is the worthy Christ of God, competent, capacitated, as we have been taught, to uphold all the glory of the blessed God. And at the same time, to uphold and sustain all the glory of the blessed God, to find time to take you and I apart and deal with your little tiny problems and mine. What are your difficulties and my difficulties beside the vast problems of this great Jesus?

Yet this man, this precious Christ, the one who touches your heart, keep thee near to thee, we often, at least we think in our hearts, keep me near to thee, take me, this is what [00:20:03] I pray, forgive me, as I came up here, take me, Jesus, to thy breast, fold it close in warmth and rest, keep me near to thee.

Beloved saints of God, we must be near to Jesus, then the fragrance of that blessed man will come out.

Somebody quoted it this afternoon. It's not that the truth of it was caught. It was that that man of all the poems written carried with him the fragrance of a heavenly man in whose company he had been.

And if you and I fail or are foolish enough not to seek the company of this heavenly man, we'll never have the fragrance of heaven pervading our walk down here.

And that is, I believe, what the blessed God is looking for. And this is the triumph, so to speak. This is the assurance of heaven prepared at the end of the day, at the end of the journey. He winds up his energy with these magnificent words, that you know so well, but they're [00:21:06] so beautiful, I'll read them once again. Although the fig tree shall not blossom, that is, all profession, so to speak, is gone to pieces, neither shall fruit be in the vines, everything God wants, He looks for and saves. The labour of the olive shall fail, it seems as though even promises were lies. And the fear of need of no mean, the flock cut off from the fold, there shall be no ardent stall.

He says, yet, yet, let things be as black as they might, let thunderclouds come over your head, beloved saints of God. You and I can say with full assurance the very words that sprang from the depths of the heart of Heaven, yet, I will rejoice.

In what?

In your circumstances? No, in your brethren. By no means.

Happy enough to be in their company, thank God for the communion of saints. But I'll rejoice in God.

It's a person. [00:22:01] This is what we call a person. The first seven verses of our Psalms are persons. Magnificent.

Glorious persons. How can you exalt this man? How can you exalt him worthily? In him we might challenge our souls. How dare we take the name of Jesus upon our lips? It's only because the sovereign mercy of the blessed God has taught us that this precious Jesus, his own beloved Son, has not only died for us, but he's up there in the glory. And he's speaking at this very moment from the place where he is. His love, beloved saints of God, streaming from that great God of his, down into your affections, in order to stir them up, in order to get the band to speak, the orchestra to play, but play me too.

No discordant notes in him. No discordant notes wanted from the assembly of God. He's the leader who praises his people. And when he is the leader, there will be that which will rise acceptably into the ear, the attuned, tender ear of God the Father.

Well, you see, I'll rejoice in the Lord. [00:23:02] I'll rejoice in the God of my salvation. Now, finally,

beloved saints of God, the Lord is my strength. Are we desirous to climb to the spirit of this Lamb? We can't go very far, perhaps, but it's an upward road. We read in the Old Testament, there is a path. There is a path, it says, that lies perpetually drawn to you. Why, even the keen eye of the vulture has never seen it. But it's a path of persuasion of peace unto the cross. It's a path of the spirit of God that leads your soul and my soul along tonight. And I believe this is how we will do it. The Lord God is my strength. That's the first note, so to speak, to that. Strength for the journey, strength for the walk, strength for worship, strength for service. God is my strength.

And this blessed God is going to be active on my account. Forbid my boasting, forgive my boasting, beloved saints of God, but this great God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, is active on my account.

[00:24:05] And this is what he's doing. He says to me, and he says to your affections, your renewed mind, he says, he will make thy feet like iron's feet.

That's it.

Sure, no slipping, steady, however difficult the ascent, there's no slipping, no sliding, no mistakes, steadily mounting, mounting, mounting, until the grand finale.

All the officers that will speak in tune, all together, all surrounding the chief musicians, all up there in the glory, all sounding forth eternally the praises of the Lord.