

The Prayer that the Righteous Pray (2)

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- [0 : 0 0] Well, if you take up your Bibles, we're going to read together once again in the prophet Habakkuk. If you have one of our church visitors Bibles, I think that's page 787.
- If not, it is very near the end of the Old Testament, after Nahum and before Zephaniah. Just hiding away there on a couple of pages.
- And we're going to read together chapter 3. We're looking at this last week when Phil was preaching on it. We're looking particularly at the last verses of the chapter, but we'll read from the beginning.
- This whole prayer, a prayer of Habakkuk, the prophet, according to Shigionoth. Some sort of musical term, it tells us it's a song. We're thinking this morning, weren't we, of substantial gospel song.
- And here is one of them. O Lord, he says, I've heard the report of you. And your work, O Lord, do I fear. In the midst of the years, revive it.
- [1 : 0 6] In the midst of the years, make it known. In wrath, remember mercy. God came from Taman. And the Holy One from Mount Paran.
- His splendor covered the heavens. And the earth was full of his praise. His brightness was like the light. Rays flashed from his hand.
- And there he veiled his power. Before him went pestilence. And plague followed at his heels. He stood and measured the earth.
- He looked and shook the nations. And then the eternal mountains were scattered. The everlasting hills sunk low. His were the everlasting ways.
- I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction. The curtains of the land of Midian did tremble. Was your wrath against the rivers, O Lord? Was your anger against the rivers?
- [2 : 0 3] Or your indignation against the sea? When you rode on your horses, on your chariots of salvation? You stripped the sheath from your bow, calling for many arrows.
- You split the earth with rivers. The mountains saw you and writhed. The raging waters swept on. The deep gave forth its voice. It lifted its hands on high.
- 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.
- You marched through the earth in fury. You threshed the nations in anger. 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 them bare from thigh to neck. You pierced with his own arrows. The heads of his warriors. Who came like a whirlwind to scatter me. Rejoicing.
- [3 : 0 4] As if to devour the poor in secret. You trampled the sea with your horses. The surging of mighty waters. 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. 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 flocks. Be cut off from the fold.

And there be no herd. In the stalls. Yet. I will rejoice. In the Lord. I will take joy. In the God of my salvation.

[4 : 04] God the Lord. Is my strength. He makes my feet like the deers. He makes me tread. On my high places.

To the choir master. With stringed instruments. Amen. May God bless to us.

His word. Well good evening. And please do turn in your Bibles. Back to the book of Habakkuk. Chapter 3. And you'll find that on page 787. Of the church Bibles.

If you've lost your place. Habakkuk chapter 3. And we look at the second section. Of this chapter. Which is really all about the prayer. That the righteous pray.

But before we come to. Listen to that prayer. Let's pray. A prayer. Of our own. Let's pray. Heavenly Father.

[4 : 59] In a world that is full of lies. And spin. We thank you for the chance. This evening. To gather together. In your name. To hear your word of truth. Remember Paul's words.

In Romans 15. When he says. That everything written. In the Old Testament. Was written for our. Instruction. That through endurance. And through the encouragement. Of the scriptures.

We might have hope. And Father. We thank you. That this includes. The book of Habakkuk. And so Lord. This evening. Would you encourage us. And give us the hope. To persevere by faith.

As we live as exiles. In this foreign land. In Jesus name we pray. Amen. Habakkuk is singing. He's singing.

A beautiful prayer. Of submission. And praise to the Lord. In response to what the Lord. Has shown him. You'll remember. Those of you. Who've been here. Over the past three weeks.

[5 : 52] That the Lord. Told Habakkuk. Of two waves. Of coming judgment. The first wave. Will sweep over. Judah. The people of God. His Old Testament church. In the form of the Babylonian army.

Back in chapter one. The Lord assured Habakkuk. That he'd seen all of the rebellion. That was taking place. Amongst his people. And as a consequence. He was sovereignly. Raising up.

A war machine. The Chaldean killers. This evil superpower nation. That was going to come. And be his instrument. Of judgment. And discipline. Over his people.

They're headed straight for Judah. And not even. The righteous remnant of faith. The group of true believers. Within the land. Not even they. Will escape this invasion.

The true people of God. Will also be swept up. In the Lord's discipline. But the Lord also assures Habakkuk. Of a second. Much larger. Coming wave.

[6 : 48] Of judgment. And it will come. At the Lord's appointed time. In history. When according to chapter two. Verse fourteen. The earth will be filled. With the knowledge. Of the glory of the Lord.

As the waters cover the sea. And on that day. All those who have proudly. Set themselves. Against the Lord. Against his word. And against his people. They will get their comeuppance.

They will face. Retribution. For what they've done. On that day. Babylon. And all those who've lived. By the same heart attitude. As Babylon. They will face.

Punishment from the Lord. For the atrocities. That they've committed. God will bring justice. And vindicate his people. In the end. In other words. Habakkuk has heard.

That God is going to judge. Everyone. God's going to judge. Everyone. Judgment will begin. With a household of faith. And then the rest of the world. Will follow. And the only hope. For everyone. Is found in chapter 2.

[7 : 45] Verse 4. Where the Lord promises. That the righteous. In chapter 2. Verse 4. The righteous. Shall live by faith. That is only those.

Who turn away. From living a life. Of sinful. Self. Sufficient pride. To humbly bow the knee. To the Lord. To look to him. For life. And to build their lives. Upon his commandments.

Only those. Those who do that. Will be delivered. And kept. And delivered. In the end. And that's why that's such a crucial verse. In Habakkuk chapter 2. Verse 4. But it's also.

Such an important book. In the rest of the Bible. For the book of Romans. Galatians. And Hebrews. All quote. Habakkuk chapter 2. Verse 4. And apply its message.

To us. Those of us. Living at this present age. The only hope for us today. In the face of the wrath of God. That is being revealed from heaven now. And which will come in all its fullness.

[8 : 41] On the last day. Is for us to have faith. In God's gospel promises. But what does that faith look like? And what does it sound like?

And of course the answer is Habakkuk chapter 3. Because as we listen to Habakkuk's prayer song. We hear the voice of genuine faith. Here. The prophet if you like.

Has been held up as a model example. Of what 2 verse 4. Is like in the flesh. As often so the case. With Old Testament prophets. So often.

The messenger. Becomes the message. The messenger. Becomes the message. They embody the message. That they're sent to preach. And in this song.

Habakkuk takes the faith. That he professes. And he works it out. In his current circumstances. Of everyday life. And the people of God. Back then in ancient Judah.

[9 : 35] And the people of God today. All of us here. We are invited to. As it were. Sing along with the prophet. In our hearts. To follow his example. To live by the same faith.

In our current circumstances. So that we will persevere. And not fall away. And last week. In chapter 3. Verse 1 to 15. We saw that.

Habakkuk actually spends. Most of his prayer song. Remembering the past. And the ways in which. The Lord appeared. To save his people. From the enemy. Let me just give you.

A quick recap. Of the three things. That he specifically highlighted. Habakkuk remembered. That the Lord showed. Terrifying power. When he appeared. When he came in the past. The sky was engulfed.

In his splendor. Flashing rays. Of pure light. Fired out. From the palms. Of his hands. The whole creation. Shook. To its very core. Nations. Nations that had opposed.

[10 : 29] God's people. Were petrified. Because of the power. Of the covenant God. Of Israel. And Habakkuk also remembered. That the Lord came. With a ferocious.

Arsenal. Ferocious weapons. At his disposal. No human power. On earth. Can compare to the power. Of the Lord. Our God. For when he appeared. He did so.

As the ultimate warrior. With unrivaled weaponry. Pestilence. And plague. Just two of his weapons. Of choice. And if you were to go through. Those verses. Later on.

You'll see. That the rivers. The seas. The earth. The deep. The lightning. The sun. The moon. All are described. As things. Which the Lord has. At his disposal.

And which in the past. The Lord has used. To wipe out the enemy. And save his people. And one in the same action. And on that note. Habakkuk remembers.

[11 : 23] Thirdly. The ways in which the Lord. Has crushed the head. Of the house of the enemy. Time and again. Through history. Giving Habakkuk. Hope. That one day soon.

The Lord would do. Exactly the same. To the king of Babylon. The Lord may even use. The enemy's own weapons. Against them. As he has done. So frequently. In the past.

Now Habakkuk remembers. These things. In his prayer song. In order to give himself. A glimpse. Of what is to come. He looked back. To look forward. And we must do the same.

Today. As the people of God. The mighty acts. Of the Lord. That have happened. In the past. Should fill us. With great fear. But also with great joy. At what is to come.

In the future. We look back. To look forward. Because God's. Former judgments. In history. Give us a foretaste. Of his final judgment. On history.

[12 : 19] Well in our passage. This week. Having remembered. The Lord who comes. Habakkuk finishes. His prayer. By declaring. That he will resolutely. Place his trust. In the Lord. No matter what happens.

Even if the whole land. Is ravaged. And ruined. By the enemy. And with the rest of our time. This evening. I want us to notice. Two things. Two marks.

Of genuine faith. That Habakkuk displays. Which should. Hopefully. Challenge us. And encourage us. The first thing is this. Genuine faith.

Trembles. At the God who speaks. Genuine faith. Trembles. At the God who speaks. Please look at verse 16. Habakkuk says. I hear. And my body trembles.

My lips. 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.

[13 : 16] To come upon. Those who invade us. So Habakkuk has heard the news. Of the coming invasion. By the Babylonian war machine. The Lord's instrument of judgment. It's on its way. It's coming.

And it will not be stopped. And that is what he's confessing here. He's confessing to the Lord. That. Lord. I've heard what you said. And I believe you. I believe your word. And it has rocked me.

To the very core of my being. I wonder if you noticed. There's a fourfold repetition. Of things describing his inner anguish. He is totally shaken. Just listen again.

My body. Trembles. My lips quiver. Rottenness has entered my bones. I'm paralyzed. With fear. I'm overwhelmed. My legs tremble.

He's honestly saying. Lord. I've heard your voice. And I believe you. And as a result. I cannot stand. I'm so struck. I know that I'm utterly powerless.

[14 : 10] In what is to come. And the only thing for me to do. Is to wait. Patiently. With knees knocking. For you to deal with Babylon. At your appointed time. Don't miss what this teaches.

About the nature of genuine faith. The turmoil and anguish. That Habakkuk is going through. Is not a denial of his faith. But it is. An evidence.

Of his faith. He is all upset. Precisely because. He believes the Lord. And his word. His trembling is caused. By his trust. I reckon.

If you're honest. That most people today. Wouldn't think about anguish. And turmoil. And faith. And those sort of terms. I reckon most of us. If we were honest. We would say that. Someone who responds. To the Lord's word.

Like this. Well they're doing something wrong. It's a sign of doubt. Or unbelief. Well not according to Habakkuk. The turmoil in his heart. Is there.

[15 : 04] Because of his faith. It's evidence. He's a true believer. Yes. Habakkuk knows. That there is a day. Of great deliverance. Coming. When the mighty. Divine warrior. Described in 3 to 15.

Will come. But that future. Glorious salvation. Will only come. After the church. Has gone through. Heavy suffering. And oppression. From the enemy. God has said.

That this will be the case. And that's why Habakkuk. It's like a plate of jelly. Genuine faith. Will tremble. At the God. Who speaks. Because sometimes. What the Lord says.

Will disturb us. Will shake us. Listen to one commentator. He says this. If you're not convinced. That this is a mark. Of true faith. Then think about. A later date.

In the Bible. When the remnant. Of faithful Israel. Was reduced. To a single individual. A similar circumstance. Developed. Alone. In the garden. Peering into the awesome abyss.

[16 : 01] Of hell. Contemplating. The spiritual exile. That he was about to experience. On the cross. The Lord Jesus himself. Sweated great drops of blood. Even though he was assured.

That the father. Would not leave his soul. In hell. Yet the reality. Of the agonies. That he had to endure. Before his deliverance. The exile. He was about to go through. Overwhelmed him.

His soul. Was exceedingly troubled. And his body. Responded. With awesome signs. Of sympathy. Genuine faith. Trembles. At the God. Who speaks. We can see that.

In Habakkuk. And we can see that. In the Lord's. Ultimate prophet. The Lord Jesus himself. Can I just say. If you're here. This evening. And if you. Find yourself.

Trembling. At some of the truths. That God speaks. Maybe it's the truth. That to follow him. You must pick up your cross. And go through. An age of tribulation. And trial. If you tremble.

[16 : 56] At those sorts of words. Then that's. Not a wrong. Response. That is genuine faith. We sometimes think. That peace. Faith will. Relieve the pressure.

And give us a peaceful. Easy feeling. In our minds. Well. Habakkuk says. The opposite. Will happen. For genuine faith. Trembles. At the God.

Who speaks. That's the first thing. Secondly. Notice. Genuine faith. Triumphs. In the God. Who saves.

Genuine faith. Triumphs. In the Lord. Who saves. Please look at verse 17. Though the fig tree. Should not blossom. Nor fruit. Beyond 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. Yet. I will rejoice. In the Lord.

[17 : 50] I will take. Joy. In the God. Of my salvation. So the same word. That causes. Habakkuk. To tremble. Is the same word. That fills him. With triumph.

Despite the fact. That he is trembling. At the promise. Of coming invasion. He resolutely. Sets his trust. On the Lord. Whose promises. That the righteous. Shall live by faith.

The Lord has told Habakkuk. That this is the case. And so he stakes. Everything upon it. He says. I'm going to. Resolutely. Stake my whole life. Upon that promise. It is his knowledge.

Of the Lord's faithfulness. To his promises. That's the source. Of great strength. And joy. Do you notice that? He's trembling. And yet at the same time. He's full of joy. Because he knows.

Who he's dealing with here. The covenant God. Babylon could do. Whatever he want. Whatever they want. To the land. And whatever they want. To Habakkuk. But he knows. That it will not.

[18 : 46] Ultimately affect. His standing. Before the covenant God. The entire. Present world order. Could pass away. But it would still. Not nullify. God's gracious promises.

That he's made. To his people. They will endure. However. The Lord said. The righteous shall live by faith. And go on living. And so Habakkuk. Trusts in that. And that's what he's saying.

In verse 17. Even if the Babylonian brutes. Burst in in the land. And seize it. With their violent ways. Even when they've ravaged. Our produce. And our sustenance.

Even when our economy. Is trashed. And we're living in poverty. Even when our livestock. Has been mauled. And we're sitting. In complete darkness.

Even when we've seen. To be utterly abandoned. By the Lord. I will. Rejoice. I will rejoice.

[19 : 39] In the fact. That I still belong. To the God. Who keeps his promises. He's promised. To deliver us. Might not look like it now. Just now it looks like. He's abandoned us. But he will. That's what he said.

And our God. Is not one. For breaking his promises. And he will give me. The strength. That I need. To stand firm. In the present. He is the one. Who will. Help me.

Look at verse 19. God the Lord. Is my strength. He makes my feet. Like deers. He makes me tread. On high places. Abacuc is.

Quoting here. From Psalm 18. Where King David. Praises the Lord. For rescuing him. From the hand of the enemy. And from the hand of Saul. You probably know it. And David says.

Back in that psalm. For who is God. But the Lord. And who is a rock. Except our God. The God who equipped me. With strength. And made my ways blameless. He made my feet.

[20 : 37] Like that of a deer. And set me secure. On the heights. And I just say. That if you're here. This evening. And if you're not. Yet a Christian.

If you're not trusting. In the Lord. Then please know. That this is what he is like. He is not a God. To be messed with. You do not mess with. The God of the Bible. But he's also the God. Who is so good.

To his people. Even when they're feeling. Oppressed. He is so good. Beyond measure. To all those. Who take him. At his word. God's people here.

Are described as being. Sure-footed. Untiring. Bounding with energy. The Lord's people. May expect. To ascend. To the heights of victory. Even when they face.

Severe setbacks. Habakkuk knows. That that is what he received. From the Lord. Even though. His current circumstances. Suggest the contrary. The Lord will keep him.

[21 : 31] And he will keep the rest. Of the remnant. Going through the invasion. And he will deliver them. In the end. But you know. I think what Habakkuk. Is speaking about here.

Isn't just found. In the return. From exile. To Babylon. Listen to O. Palmer Robertson. He says this. Is it resurrection faith. That comes to expression.

In these final words. Of the prophet. Is he speaking. Of an expectation. Of a life. After the last enemy. Has done his worst. Certainly. His faith.

Is not far from that point. I think what Habakkuk. Is really speaking about. Is the same reality. That the apostle Paul. Would later. Write about. In Romans chapter 8.

When he says. To the church. Of Jesus Christ. We. God's people. Are more than conquerors. Through him. Who loves us. For I'm sure. That neither death. Nor life. Nor angels.

[22 : 25] Nor rulers. Nor things in the present. Nor things to come. Nor powers. Nor height. Nor depth. Nor anything else. In all creation. Will be able to separate us.

From the love of God. In Christ Jesus. Our Lord. Genuine faith. Trembles at the God. Who speaks. But it also triumphs. In the God who saves.

Even in the face. Of horrific. Coming loss. Friends. If you're here. This evening. Then you are. Someone. And if you're a Christian.

Then you are someone. Who is in exile. You are strangers. Living in this world. Because your home. Is in the presence. Of the Lord. And as long as you're living. In exile. Then you are surrounded.

By enemies. Of the gospel. Yes. They are defeated enemies. Like sin. Satan. And death. But they remain powerful. And active. And they may well.

[23 : 20] Ravage the church. In our day. Just like the Babylonians. Did to Judah. Back then. And the challenge for us. Is will we follow. Habakkuk's example. Will we tremble.

Knowing that the Lord. Has called us. In his word. To endure many hardships. Before entering. The kingdom of God. And in this life. The church may well.

Lose everything. You and I. Might well. Lose everything. And certainly. If Britain carries on. In the current trajectory. That it's set on. Get ready. For a lot more opposition.

From the world around us. We might lose everything. That's what the word of God. Says to us. And we should tremble. But we should also. Triumph in the one. Who gives us the promise.

Because he says to us. If you stand by me. And trust in my promises. I will keep you. I will raise you one day. In power. When my son returns. And you will enjoy life.

[24 : 14] In the new heavens. In the new earth. Forever. Never again to suffer. Never again to face injustice. One of my good friends. You don't know him. He lives down south.

In England. And over the past. He's a Christian. And over the past couple of years. When I've looked at his life. I've pretty much seen. All the things. That fill me with terror. All the things.

That keep me awake at night. I have seen. Swamp upon this friend of mine. He has received a total kick in. From the enemies of the gospel. Especially the enemies of death.

He's seen loved ones. And his family. Drop away like flies. Well before their time. And now. His own body is failing. And he's dying. And he's dying. And decaying. And yet.

And yet. Do you know. Every time I speak to this friend of mine. Every time I catch up with him. He reminds me. Of Habakkuk. Because he does tremble. At what he's going through.

[25 : 08] And he knows it's part of the cross shaped life. He trembles. And he has anguish. But even in his tears. There's triumph. He's this weird mixture of both.

Because he knows. The Lord. And he knows the Lord's promise. That the righteous shall live by faith. And he's staked everything upon that. And so that's why. Whilst he's full of trembling.

He's also full of triumph. In the Lord who saves. What about you? When the enemies of the gospel. Smash you in the face. Next. What will your song be?

What about us as a church. As a church family. When we suffer. We've suffered together in the past. We will suffer again in the future. Will we echo the words of the prophet in our heart?

Will we sing this song in our souls? If we do. If we trust in the Lord. We will not be disappointed. Let's be quiet for a moment.

[26 : 09] To respond to the word of God in our own hearts. And then I'll pray for us. Heavenly Father.

Heavenly Father. We know that for as long as we live in this world. We your people. Are exiles. Living in a foreign land. And we're surrounded by the enemies of the gospel. The sinful nature that remains in us.

Constantly seeks to make us wander away from you. The God we love. The world around us. The world around us. Often opposes us. For loving your word. And living by it. The evil one is ever near us.

Seeking to devour us. Oh Father. Please have mercy on us. And help us. By the power of your spirit. Please give us the strength. To resolutely set our faith.

And trust upon your promises. And fill us with joy. Give us the desire. To want to echo this song of Habakkuk. In our weary. And often downcast hearts.

[27 : 10] So that we will not fall away. But instead we will wait for the glorious appearing of your son. The divine warrior. Who's already inaugurated your kingdom.

And who will one day come again. To fully consummate it in power. Help us to look forward to that day. When the earth will see you. And all who've trusted in your promises.

Will stand vindicated. Raised in power. Never again to suffer. But instead to glorify you forever. In the new heavens and the new earth. We pray these things in Jesus precious name.

Amen.