

[Habakkuk 3:17-19](#)

Rejoicing in God in the Midst of Trouble

Introduction

Consider the following stories, which are in Scripture. A husband's wife dies suddenly in the evening. The husband's response is to obey God's directions, which are not to mourn or weep. The next morning after her death he says "I did as I was commanded". A man loses everything he has, including all of his children, his property and his health. His response is to say "The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD."

In the text, the prophet Habakkuk experiences similar circumstances in the midst of trouble and despair. In essence, he is saying that even though everything should fail, I will rejoice in the LORD. So, the central truth of God's message for us is this - we desperately need to rejoice in God in the midst of trouble. When security, success and prosperity are taken away, why can we say "I will rejoice in the LORD; I will take joy in the God of my salvation. God, the LORD, is my strength"?

We want to take a look at what God says in His Word about the issue of rejoicing in Him in the midst of trouble. From a biblical perspective, what does that look like, how will we respond and why will we respond in a way that would honor God? After all, the Bible is the absolute truth; it is the very Word of God that points us to everything we need to know about life and godliness.

We desperately need to rejoice in God in the midst of trouble. And to that end we want to be encouraged in the fact that God is always for us, so who can be against us. Also, we want to apprehend the truth that Jesus is our peace, our joy, our strength and our salvation. We can see that even in the Old Testament. So, here are three truths that we can take from God's Word in Habakkuk 3:17-19 concerning this desperate need to rejoice in God in the midst of trouble:

- Verse 17 - God orchestrates trouble
- Verse 18 - God is the treasure
- Verse 19 - God provides triumph over trouble

Historical Background

Habakkuk is the eighth of the 12 Minor Prophets in the Old Testament of the Bible. This portion of Scripture is believed to cover the time period of approximately 640-600 BC. This is based on reference to the rise and advance of the Babylonians as cited in the book of Habakkuk. In fact, he writes about the effects of his fear over the impending Babylonian invasion. "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." (Habakkuk 3:16)

Habakkuk's fear of the Babylonians was certainly justified, as they were described as "dreaded and fearsome". Habakkuk even complained to God about how He could use a wicked nation, such as Babylon, for His divine purpose. But Habakkuk said, "Yet I will quietly wait for the day

of trouble to come upon people who invade us". Here Habakkuk exuded a sense of confidence, trust and faith in God. In fact, this truth is proclaimed in [Habakkuk 2:4](#)

⁴ *“Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright within him, but the righteous shall live by his faith.*

[Hab 2:4](#) (ESV)

The second part of that verse, “the righteous shall live by his faith”, is quoted three times in the New Testament in [Romans 1:17](#), [Galatians 3:11](#) and [Hebrews 10:38](#), so it must be important. In fact, we see this theme of the righteous having faith in God throughout the whole of Scripture. For example, going all the way back to Genesis, Scripture says that “Abraham believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness.” The apostle Paul writing to the church in the book of Romans, chapter 4, stated that the words "it was counted to him" were not written for his sake alone, but for ours also.

Here is the beauty and majesty of God that He would inspire Habakkuk to write about our desperate need to rejoice in God, Himself, in the midst of trouble. This points us toward the cross of Jesus. God not sparing His own Son, orchestrated the trouble that rescued people like you and me from sin and death. Here’s what God’s Word says in [Isaiah 53:10a](#).

Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief;

[Isaiah 53:10 a](#) (ESV)

That's the gospel, the good news. God orchestrated the trouble, which was Jesus receiving the punishment of God’s wrath on the cross, so that our sins would be forgiven. So that we can receive the free gift of a new life in Christ. That’s why partaking of the bread and cup as believers in Christ at the Table of the Lord is a celebration and yet solemn gathering. We proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes, remembering the awful price that was paid by Jesus in order that those who believe in His Name will be set free from slavery to sin.

Church, we were bought with the precious blood of Christ in order that we could have a new life in Him. And that new life in Christ centers on trusting that only through Jesus’ blood and righteousness are we made right with God. Habakkuk pointed to Jesus when he wrote “the righteous shall live by his faith.” And just as God orchestrated the trouble associated with Jesus bearing the weight of our sins on the cross, God orchestrates trouble to test His people's faith and prove His faithfulness.

1. God orchestrates trouble - [Habakkuk 3:17](#)

All of the things that would happen as described in verse 17 certainly would cause trouble and reason for despair. In the Near East culture, figs, grapes, olives, grain, sheep and cattle were, and still are, things of security, success and prosperity. To take all of that away would result in a devastating impact to the entire society. Yet, God orchestrated the trouble that was to befall His people. [Habakkuk 1:6](#)

⁶ *For behold, I am raising up the Chaldeans,
that bitter and hasty nation,*

*who march through the breadth of the earth,
to seize dwellings not their own.*

[Hab 1:6](#) (ESV)

The word orchestrate is defined as to arrange or direct the elements of a situation to produce a desired effect. Through all of history, God orchestrates events for his glory and for the good of His people. Events that man would characterize as good or bad are all orchestrated by the God of the Bible. [Proverbs 16:4](#) and [Lamentations 3:37-38](#).

⁴ *The LORD has made everything for its purpose, even the wicked for the day of trouble.*

[Prov 16:4](#) (ESV)

³⁷ *Who has spoken and it came to pass, unless the Lord has commanded it? ³⁸ Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that good and bad come?*

[Lam 3:37-38](#) (ESV)

At the introduction of this message, the stories from Scripture of the husband whose wife died and the man who lost everything were about Ezekiel and Job respectively. It was God Himself who orchestrated Job's suffering by allowing Satan to strike him. It was God Himself who took away the delight of Ezekiel's eyes, which was his wife. In each of these instances, God's sovereignty was manifested in a troublesome situation.

Why this orchestration of trouble by God? We see it in Scripture from Genesis to Revelation. There was trouble in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3), where the results were catastrophic and sin entered all of creation. There was trouble in the garden of Gethsemane (Luke 14:32-42, Matthew 26:36-46) where Jesus was greatly distressed and troubled as He would take the punishment of God's wrath for the forgiveness of our sins. As mentioned earlier, God orchestrates trouble for His glory and for the good of His people. Yes, He tests our faith for our good and for His glory.

Nothing has changed in several millennia with regards to God orchestrating troubles and trials to test His people. What does that mean for us, the church, assembling at 1675 County Highway 6 in La Crescent, MN? How will the church respond to the troubles and trials God orchestrates to test His people, especially in a culture that grows increasingly hostile toward the gospel?

For example, what would happen if La Crescent Evangelical Free Church were to be threatened with loss of non-profit status due to erosion of religious liberties? What would happen if preaching truth in the pulpit were to become a violation of civil liberties with regard to issues such as same-sex marriage? The answer isn't to run and hide and hope for the best. The answer isn't to tolerate and excuse sin in order to blend in with the culture surrounding us.

One of the answers is that the church will have to respond by standing firm in God's Word. This means loving our enemies and praying for those who persecute us (Matthew 5:44). This means suffering for righteousness' sake by honoring Christ the Lord as holy (1 Peter 3:15). This means putting on the whole armor of God in order to be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm (Ephesians 6:13).

In spite of Habakkuk's fear of the Babylonian invasion, he knew he could stand firm in the God who orchestrated trouble. And like Habakkuk, we, too, need to know that we can stand firm in the God who orchestrates trouble. Will we be able to say "Yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will take joy in the God of my salvation. God, the LORD, is my strength". One of the reasons Habakkuk, as well as you and I, can have trust to stand firm in God is because God is the treasure.

2. God is the treasure - [Habakkuk 3:18](#)

In the midst of an impending invasion by the Babylonians and the fear and trouble associated with that event, Habakkuk saw God as his treasure. Otherwise, he couldn't have rejoiced in the LORD or taken joy in Him. But what does it mean when we say "God is the treasure"? Here's what Scripture states about that. [Matthew 6:21](#)

²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.
[Matt 6:21](#) (ESV)

When God is our treasure, our affections and our desires are centered in Him. We see Him as more valuable than anyone or anything else. His covenant-keeping ways are proof that He can be trusted. He is our hope in all situations both good and bad. In fact, there is not one example in Scripture where God failed to keep His promises and thus be the treasure for His people. And because God is the treasure, we can confidently make a choice to trust in Him, even in trials and difficulties.

In [Habakkuk 3:18](#), the prophet makes a choice in the midst of trouble. Habakkuk says "I will rejoice in the LORD; I will take joy in the God of my salvation." Habakkuk could have said something like this - "Oh no! Now what do we do? We'd better hunker down and hide and hope things turn out okay." How about you and I? Is the LORD our hope and trust today? Do we find Him to be our treasure, even during times when the shadow of death is cast upon one's life?

Some of you may remember a man named Bill Westphal, who attended First Free Evangelical Church in La Crosse. Bill was 42 years old when he passed away in June 1995 after an 18 month struggle with cancer. Westphal was quoted as saying "Your faith is what gives you the assurance that God knows what he's doing." And asked if he didn't sometimes question why he was chosen to suffer, his response was "Why not me? Why not Bill?"

Habakkuk, Job and Ezekiel looked ahead to the cross and found reason to rejoice in God as their treasure during times of trouble. Bill Westphal rejoiced in God as his treasure, looking back to the cross, during a time of trouble. Through faith, all of them, and all of us too, who are believers in Christ, knowing that what God has prepared for us in Christ, even before the foundation of the world, is far better than the troubles associated with the loss of worldly success, security and prosperity. For example, here's what the apostle Paul writes in [Philippians 4:4-7](#) concerning rejoicing in the Lord.

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. ⁵ Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; ⁶ do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Phil 4:4-7 (ESV)

Where was Paul when he wrote this? He was in prison for sharing the good news of salvation in Christ alone. Scripture is quite clear on the matter of rejoicing in the Lord and treasuring Him, even in times of trouble. Based on who God is for His people, the believer in Christ can be confident to trust in Him, be joyful to obey Him, have peace to be content in Him and be assured of His supremacy over all things, including times of trial. Here's what God says about experiencing trials in [James 1:2-4](#).

² Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, ³ for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. ⁴ And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

[James 1:2-4 \(ESV\)](#)

Habakkuk's faith was tested in order to produce steadfastness in the God of his joy, strength and salvation. When he wrote "but the righteous shall live by his faith", he really meant it. He saw God as his treasure, and we should too, because of His unsearchable grace, His unfailing love and His covenant-keeping ways. And with God being his treasure, Habakkuk also realized that God provides triumph over trouble. We desperately need to realize that too.

3. God Provides Triumph Over Trouble - [Habakkuk 3:19](#)

The fact that God provides triumph over trouble is heralded in the last verse of the text. We can only triumph over trouble when God, the LORD, is our strength. Everything else that we put our confidence in, such as trends in the stock market, the balance in our bank account, our job status or the state of our health will ultimately fall far short of the ever-sustaining truth that God is for us, even when things aren't going well.

Consider these truths from [Romans 8:32-35](#). God didn't spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all. How will He not also with Him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Jesus is the One who died, was raised, who is at the right hand of God and is indeed interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall it be tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger or sword? Why are any of these things true? Why do any of them apply to us? Because God in Christ triumphs over trouble. That's the gospel! That's the good news!

How about you and I? Do we rejoice in God when there's security, prosperity and success in our life, but then grumble and question His ways when difficulties and troubles arise?

This is a prosperity gospel, which seems right, but is contrary to the truth of Scripture. A prosperity gospel finds security in the things that come from God's hand, instead of finding security in God Himself. When God provides triumph over trouble, it will be accompanied by situations where nothing else but totally leaning on God is going to make the difference.

For example, consider the following verses from Scripture, which we should make an effort to own, treasure and cling to during times of trouble. [Psalm 46:1](#) and [Psalm 91:15](#).

¹ *God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.*
[Psalms 46:1](#) (ESV)

¹⁵ *When he calls to me, I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will rescue him and honor him.*
[Psalms 91:15](#) (ESV)

Not only did Habakkuk triumph in God as his strength, but he knew God could be trusted when He said "He makes my feet like the deer's" and "He makes me tread on my high places". If you're a hunter, you know that deer are sure-footed and swift in order to escape danger. This is analogous to what Habakkuk is saying with regard to God being the only One to lift His people out of trouble. Here's what [Psalm 40:2](#) says about that.

² *He drew me up from the pit of destruction, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure.*
[Psalms 40:2](#) (ESV)

Only God can take a person out of the pit of despair, out of the miry bog of sin and set his/her feet upon a rock, the rock of salvation, and make his/her steps secure in Christ. Only God can make a man or woman tread on high places and above the troubles of the world. And because of that, we have every reason to sing praises to His Name. The psalmist in the 100th Psalm writes "Enter His gates with thanksgiving, and His courts with praise! Give thanks to Him; bless His name!" That's probably why Habakkuk writes "to the choirmaster: with stringed instruments".

Conclusion

Indeed we do have reason to sing praises to God's great name. Even though He is the One who orchestrates trouble, He is the treasure and He provides triumph over trouble. Why is that good news? We are messed up people living in a messed up world. If a person doesn't trust God to be the One who provides triumph over trouble, then we have no hope. But there is hope! Hope is in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Do we long for Jesus? Or do we long for our success, security and prosperity? When all fails, God does not fail. In good times and in bad times, we have every reason to say "All I have is Christ", which speaks to the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus as Lord and Savior (Philippians 3:8).

Difficult and troublesome situations lie ahead for all of us. Perhaps these will be manifested in the declining health of a loved one or even our own health. Perhaps these will be manifested by the loss of a job or financial problems due to unforeseen circumstances. Perhaps these will be manifested by the church encountering more and more persecution. Scripture states that indeed those who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted (2 Timothy 3:12).

But here's one thing that will remain constant. No matter what happens, God is ruling and reigning today, tomorrow and forever. God is not worried about a court's ruling on same-sex

marriage. God is not unaware when a pastor is tortured for his faith in Christ. God's grace will continue to be lavished on those whom He loves, even people whose loved ones were shot to death at a Bible study. No one can snatch God's people out of His hands (John 10:28-29). Nothing can separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:38-39). Not death. Not cancer. Not depression. Nothing! Nothing! Nothing!

Church, we have to trust in God as our treasure and that He will provide triumph over trouble. If we trust in ourselves or anything else other than our Lord and Savior, Christ Jesus, we have no hope. We all have a desperate need to rejoice in God as our joy, salvation and strength in the midst of trouble.

Here's a verse from Scripture I'd like to share with you as this message comes to a close. Jesus is speaking that there will be trouble in the world, not might be, but there will be trouble. [John 16:33](#)

³³ *I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.*"
[John 16:33](#) (ESV)

Here's a final thought. This Scripture crystalizes the truth that even though God orchestrates trouble for His glory and for our good, we desperately need to rejoice in Him as our treasure and the One who provides triumph in the midst of trouble. That's really good news! Praise God!