



# Singing in the Rain

## Habakkuk 3

If you've ever faced a difficult or painful situation and it was something that you knew that God could do something, or should do something about, but he didn't, and you were confused -- then the book of Habakkuk should speak to you.

Let me **review** just a bit. Written somewhere around the year 600 B.C., Habakkuk was one of the 12 minor prophets. His story a little different from the others. The other prophets represented God's message to the people, Habakkuk also represented the people's message back to God.

You may wonder why this took place? Well, God spoke to the Prophet and said "Go tell them the people are sinning and are corrupt and I'm going to have to judge them." And Habakkuk probably said back "Well, you're right, they are." But then God said something to Habakkuk that really knocked him off his feet, that really seemed to him totally unjust and unfair. God said "I'm going to use a people who are much more evil, more sinful, more unrighteous people, the Babylonians as my instrument of judgment on the Israelites."

Then Habakkuk recoiled, "God, that doesn't seem fair, and we protest! God, we know you're supposed to be just but that doesn't seem just at all."

If you've ever had an experience like that with God, and you ended up thinking, "God that just doesn't seem fair" then you'll appreciate this book.

(Screwtape letter)

Now we've been using a **DIAGRAM** to help us understand the flow of this book. Let me show it to you again today. I called it "the dip." It looks like this... (SEE LAST PAGE)

If you put a little "X" right here, this would be a starting point, a person who is not yet met the love and grace of God. But then the Holy Spirit begins to work in that person's life, *maybe your life today*, and they come to put their faith and trust in God through Jesus Christ and something new and wonderful suddenly begins to happen. They are filled with new life. They now have God's presence with them and everything suddenly seems different. And they, zoom, spiritually grow rapidly to here....

Everything changes. They pray and God answers their prayers. And there is light, and God presence is evident everywhere in their life. Because now they see things through a whole new perspective.

***But then what happens is that life goes on.*** And later they will pray again about something, and God doesn't seem to answer that prayer. And something goes wrong in their life. And they begin to say "Wait God, I thought we were here. Where I ask you something and you did what I wanted you to do, but you didn't?" Or something bad happens to someone they love who's innocent and they say "That doesn't seem fair!" God you could do something about it, but you're not, and I don't understand?

There's probably not one Christian here who has been a Christian more than a little while who is not experienced something like what I'm talking about right now. And we're calling it what Henry Blackaby called it in his book "experiencing God" -- he called it a "**Crisis of Belief.**"

So what happens? A lot of people then want to go back to their last spiritual high. They try to deny the reality that they're in at the moment.

Other people come to that, but they give up on God and they go back here... "Either you're not the

Habakkuk 3.lwp

God I thought you were, or you're not really fair, so forget you and I'm going back to life without you." "God, if that is how you're going to play, then I'm out. I quit."

That's what happens to a lot of people. They had a crisis of belief. And in your notes you might want to write at this point "**Chapter 1.**" Because in Chapter 1, that's where Habakkuk is living. "God, I don't understand?"

Chapter 2, he goes into a season of waiting. You might want to write "**Chapter 2**" here. In Chapter 2 God says to him "Be quiet and listen. I want you to write this down." And wait, and wait, and wait.

In Chapter 3 we see something very beautiful. Because even though the situation doesn't change, Habakkuk's faith goes to a new "**chapter 3**" level (here). (James...)

A lot of people want to have this very real intimate faith in God, but don't recognize that God often will use the dip to prove his faithfulness and brings you to a chapter 3 type of faith.

chapter 1, verse one

**Habakkuk 3:1** *<sup>1</sup>A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet. On shigionoth.*

What's that? Most likely it's a musical setting for a song. So Chapter 3 is a prayer set to a song. We call them "psalms." That's why I called today's message "Singing in the Rain." Because Habakkuk in Chapter 3 creates a worship psalm in the midst of his trials. He demonstrates a Chapter 3 type of faith.

**Habakkuk 3:2** *<sup>2</sup>Lord, I have heard of your fame; I stand in awe of your deeds, O Lord. Renew them in our day, in our time make them known; in wrath remember mercy.*

He's saying "God, I've heard about your miracles, your power, your glory, but God you're not doing them right now."

I can admit there are times in my past where God's presence seemed more real than at other times. And God's power seemed more present than it did at other times. It was like, God was doing this and that and this, and all of a sudden I wake up and it's like "God I know you can, but you're not. And what's Habakkuk is saying is "God, do it again!"

The word translated renew means to *renew, revive, restore*. "God, I remember when you used to do this. God, do it again."

What do you do when you're in the dip when circumstances aren't improving? How do you climb out of the dip? We're going to look at **three things that you can do to move to a chapter 3 type of faith.**

## I. REMEMBER

THE FIRST ONE IS TO REMEMBER WHAT GOD HAS DONE.

We're going to look back and remember the faithfulness, the character, and the goodness of God. We going to remember what God has done.

And here's what Habakkuk is going to do -- he's going to look at some tangible things that trigger his memory of God. Things, smells, can trigger our memory, can't it?

Apple pie -- grandma's house, no, mothballs...

That's what Habakkuk does as he goes down a "memory journey" to trigger his remembrance of God.

**Habakkuk 3:3** *<sup>3</sup>God came from Teman, the Holy One from Mount Paran. Selah His glory covered the heavens and his praise filled the earth.*

What is this place? Well, the original hearers would know exactly what it was. You see, when God delivered the Israelites from the Egyptians and he parted the Red Sea, this was the very place that God took them for refuge. It was this very place that they started to become the people of God all over again.

So he's saying, "I remember how God worked at this place." Just like often times the people built a monument or altered to remember something that God had done. Like when we take the bread and the blood to remember what Jesus has done at the cross.

**Habakkuk 3:4-6** *<sup>4</sup>His splendor was like the sunrise; rays flashed from his hand, where his power was hidden. <sup>5</sup>Plague went before him; pestilence followed his steps. <sup>6</sup>He stood, and shook the earth; he looked, and made the nations tremble. (most moms have a look like that) *The ancient mountains crumbled and the age-old hills collapsed. His ways are eternal.**

Here's what Habakkuk does, and you can read your Bible verses 7 to 15. He goes through this very detailed explanation of remembering when God displayed his glory and power through nature. In

fact you can almost hear him. When you guided us through fire and cloud. When you supplied bread from heaven. When the walls came tumbling down. ***God, I remember what you're capable of. Renew those deeds in our day.***

When we're in the dip, we have to Remember. To go back into your past and remember what God has done in your life. Because he's still the same God today, even if your experience is different.

I remember when I was going to seminary how so many times Nina and I were unsure of where the money would come from, and God cause something to happen, or put on someone's heart to send us money and it would be exactly what we needed at that time.

One we reach the point where I would not be able to continue because we had no money for the next semester. And out of the blue the company I used to work for in the past called and asked me if I would do the photography for a company calendar and they would pay me the going rate for a commercial photographer. But it had to all be done in one particular week to meet their schedule. I was thrilled, but I was also in the middle of my semester. "What week is that?" The week turned out to be the one week the school gave us off called "reading week" where there were no classes. Isn't that a coincidence? Ha, ha!

It can be all kinds of things. Big or little. Maybe you remember the time you walked into a church service and you just knew, you just knew that that message got planned just for you. You can remember that. Or how God rescued you from danger or prevented something from happening. Or one day, you were reading the Bible and you go, "Oh my goodness, God had to put that there for me!"

You see, the first thing we have to do is remember how God has worked, **because what we're really doing is remembering the character of God**.

**S.M. Lockridge - video.**

## II. ACCEPT WHAT GOD IS DOING

The second thing you do is ACCEPT WHAT GOD IS DOING IN YOUR LIFE RIGHT NOW. You accept.

Now it doesn't mean you roll over and play dead. It doesn't mean you stop asking God for help. Or for God to fix the problem or even do a miracle. But when you're in the dip, it's time to acknowledge that you're in the dip. It's time to accept that and not deny it.

And if God has spoken to you (as he did with Habakkuk) about this, you accept what God has told you. Because too many Christians don't.

They are what I call H.I.T.S. Christians. know what that stands for? "Head in the Sand" Too Many Christians Put Their Heads in the Sand.

- when the doctor says, pay your health is not very good. You got to make some changes. And they don't heed his words and just go on, and they put their head in the sand.
- The marriage is in trouble and your spouse says "We need some counseling," but they say "Hey, it'll work out I'm sure." And they put their head in the sand.
- When finances are bad, yet they say "but I want the house, but I want the house." And they buy the House "on faith", and they put their head in the sand.
- When the storm is coming some Christians don't Prepare. They don't face the truth. They just put their head in the sand.

Too many people, we deny the reality of what's going on. Doesn't mean we don't pray for a miracle. But when God has spoken clearly, we accept the reality, even if they don't like it. And maybe God is saying to you, "Pull Your Head Out."

**Habakkuk 3:16** *<sup>16</sup>I heard and my heart pounded, my lips quivered at the sound; decay crept into my bones, and my legs trembled. Yet I will wait patiently for the day of calamity to come on the nation invading us.*

"I realized that what God said is going to come to pass, and it's not going to be pleasant. I don't like it, but I accept it." God spoke, and Habakkuk didn't go into the HITS phase. He looked truth squarely in the face. He knew some people weren't going to make it. Probably he would make it. There's going to be bloodshed, and I don't like it." "But I'm going to trust God and ACCEPT what He is doing, even though I don't fully understand.

It's not a denial. It's not a denial. but he knew God had spoken, and he was willing to accept what God is doing. **(Tony Snow - SEE PAGE 5)**

## III. TRUST

Now, are you with me so far? You REMEMBER what God has done. You ACCEPT what God is doing. And here's the beauty of what happens.

Number three. Habakkuk teaches us to TRUST WHAT GOD IS GOING TO DO.

We remember what he did, we accept what he's doing, and we trust what he is going to do. And this is out very clearly in the curse of 17-18.

He says, I don't understand, I don't like it. The Babylonians should get there's - we're getting ours, and I don't understand. Yet...

**Habakkuk 3:17-18** *<sup>17</sup>Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, (though I've got no reason to rejoice) <sup>18</sup>yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior.*

When he has no reason whatsoever physically and visibly to rejoice he says,

- "Even though the fig tree doesn't bud, yet I will trust in the Lord my God.
- Even though there are no grapes on the vine, yet I will rejoice in the Lord my God....

**You may say**

- Even though my spouse said "till death do us part" and didn't live up to that promise, yet I will trust in the Lord my God....
- Even though my kids are making very scary decisions right now yet I will trust in the Lord my God....
- Even though we've prayed physically for someone to get better, and they've actually gotten worse yet I will trust in the Lord my God....
- Even though my house will not sell and were on the line yet I will trust in the Lord my God....
- Even though finances are tough and it costs \$100 to fill my gas tank yet I will trust in the Lord my God....
- Even though I don't like it, even though I don't understand it, even though I know He could and

I think He should, but He doesn't, yet I will trust in the Lord my God....

I pray every single one of you will grow to what I'll call a Habakkuk Chapter 3 type of faith.

- But it can't happen unless first you have a Chapter 1 type of questioning.
- And then you have a chapter 2 type of waiting
- Because God can do more in you through the dip then he can on the mountain top.

**And life really looks like this...** and in the low times God proves his faithfulness and character and grace and good news.

One of the best things about serving Christ for many years now is that now I can say "**I've walked with Jesus through enough yesterday's to trust him with all my tomorrows.**" I pray you experienced that, if not yet, then one day. That you have known his faithfulness in enough yesterday's to trust him enough for all of your tomorrows.

Check out this last verse

**Habakkuk 3:19** *<sup>19</sup>The Sovereign Lord is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to go on the heights.*

(located on the screen...)

When you do the Habakkuk. What is it his name mean? It means to embrace, to wrestle.

Even though he may not change the outward circumstances, or he may, he will take you spiritually to a new level of trust -- if you well embrace him.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I am indebted to Craig Groeschel, Senior Pastor of Lifechurch for this sermon series. I found it so good personally that I chose to share it, with only minor adaptations, with my congregation.

## Cancer's Unexpected Blessings

*When you enter the Valley of the Shadow of Death, things change.*

**Tony Snow**

*Commentator and broadcaster Tony Snow announced that he had colon cancer in 2005. Following surgery and chemo-therapy, Snow joined the Bush administration in April 2006 as press secretary. Unfortunately, on March 23 Snow, 51, a husband and father of three, announced that the cancer had recurred, with tumors found in his abdomen—leading to surgery in April, followed by more chemotherapy. Snow went back to work in the White House Briefing Room on May 30, but resigned August 31. CT asked Snow what spiritual lessons he has been learning through the ordeal.*

Blessings arrive in unexpected packages—in my case, cancer.

Those of us with potentially fatal diseases—and there are millions in America today—find ourselves in the odd position of coping with our mortality while trying to fathom God's will. Although it would be the height of presumption to declare with confidence What It All Means, Scripture provides powerful hints and consolations.

The first is that we shouldn't spend too much time trying to answer the why questions: Why me? Why must people suffer? Why can't someone else get sick? We can't answer such things, and the questions themselves often are designed more to express our anguish than to solicit an answer.

I don't know why I have cancer, and I don't much care. It is what it is—a plain and indisputable fact. Yet even while staring into a mirror darkly, great and stunning truths begin to take shape. Our maladies define a central feature of our existence: We are fallen. We are imperfect. Our bodies give out.

But despite this—because of it—God offers the possibility of salvation and grace. We don't know how the narrative of our lives will end, but we get to choose how to use the interval between now and the moment we meet our Creator face-to-face.

Second, we need to get past the anxiety. The mere thought of dying can send adrenaline flooding through your system. A dizzy, unfocused panic seizes you. Your heart thumps; your head swims. You think of nothingness and swoon. You fear partings; you worry about the impact on family and friends. You fidget and get nowhere.

To regain footing, remember that we were born not into death, but into life—and that the journey continues after we have finished our days on this earth. We accept this on faith, but that faith is nourished by a conviction that stirs even within many nonbelieving hearts—an intuition that the gift of life, once given, cannot be taken away. Those who have been stricken enjoy the special privilege of being able to fight with their might, main, and faith to live—fully, richly, exuberantly—no matter how their days may be numbered.

Third, we can open our eyes and hearts. God relishes surprise. We want lives of simple, predictable ease—smooth, even trails as far as the eye can see—but God likes to go off-road. He provokes us with twists and turns. He places us in predicaments that seem to defy our endurance and comprehension—and yet don't. By his love and grace, we persevere. The challenges that make our hearts leap and stomachs churn invariably strengthen our faith and grant measures of wisdom and joy we would not experience otherwise.

### **'You Have Been Called'**

Picture yourself in a hospital bed. The fog of anesthesia has begun to wear away. A doctor stands at your feet; a loved one holds your hand at the side. "It's cancer," the healer announces.

The natural reaction is to turn to God and ask him to serve as a cosmic Santa. "Dear God, make it all go away. Make everything simpler." But another voice whispers: "You have been called." Your quandary has drawn you closer to God, closer to those you love, closer to the issues that matter—and has dragged into insignificance the banal concerns that occupy our "normal time."

There's another kind of response, although usually short-lived—an inexplicable shudder of excitement, as if a clarifying moment of calamity has swept away everything trivial and tinny, and placed before us the challenge of important questions.

The moment you enter the Valley of the Shadow of Death, things change. You discover that Christianity is not something doughy, passive, pious, and soft. Faith may be the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things

not seen. But it also draws you into a world shorn of fearful caution. The life of belief teems with thrills, boldness, danger, shocks, reversals, triumphs, and epiphanies. Think of Paul, traipsing through the known world and contemplating trips to what must have seemed the antipodes (Spain), shaking the dust from his sandals, worrying not about the morrow, but only about the moment.

There's nothing wilder than a life of humble virtue—for it is through selflessness and service that God wrings from our bodies and spirits the most we ever could give, the most we ever could offer, and the most we ever could do.

Finally, we can let love change everything. When Jesus was faced with the prospect of crucifixion, he grieved not for himself, but for us. He cried for Jerusalem before entering the holy city. From the Cross, he took on the cumulative burden of human sin and weakness, and begged for forgiveness on our behalf.

We get repeated chances to learn that life is not about us—that we acquire purpose and satisfaction by sharing in God's love for others. Sickness gets us partway there. It reminds us of our limitations and dependence. But it also gives us a chance to serve the healthy. A minister friend of mine observes that people suffering grave afflictions often acquire the faith of two people, while loved ones accept the burden of two people's worries and fears.

### **Learning How to Live**

Most of us have watched friends as they drifted toward God's arms not with resignation, but with peace and hope. In so doing, they have taught us not how to die, but how to live. They have emulated Christ by transmitting the power and authority of love.

I sat by my best friend's bedside a few years ago as a wasting cancer took him away. He kept at his table a worn Bible and a 1928 edition of the Book of Common Prayer. A shattering grief disabled his family, many of his old friends, and at least one priest. Here was a humble and very good guy, someone who apologized when he winced with pain because he thought it made his guest uncomfortable. He retained his equanimity and good humor literally until his last conscious moment. "I'm going to try to beat [this cancer]," he told me several months before he died. "But if I don't, I'll see you on the other side."

His gift was to remind everyone around him that even though God doesn't promise us tomorrow, he does promise us eternity—filled with life and love we cannot comprehend—and that one can in the throes of sickness point the rest of us toward timeless truths that will help us weather future storms.

Through such trials, God bids us to choose: Do we believe, or do we not? Will we be bold enough to love, daring enough to serve, humble enough to submit, and strong enough to acknowledge our limitations? Can we surrender our concern in things that don't matter so that we might devote our remaining days to things that do?

When our faith flags, he throws reminders in our way. Think of the prayer warriors in our midst. They change things, and those of us who have been on the receiving end of their petitions and intercessions know it.

It is hard to describe, but there are times when suddenly the hairs on the back of your neck stand up, and you feel a surge of the Spirit. Somehow you just know: Others have chosen, when talking to the Author of all creation, to lift us up—to speak of us!

This is love of a very special order. But so is the ability to sit back and appreciate the wonder of every created thing. The mere thought of death somehow makes every blessing vivid, every happiness more luminous and intense. We may not know how our contest with sickness will end, but we have felt the ineluctable touch of God.

What is man that Thou art mindful of him? We don't know much, but we know this: No matter where we are, no matter what we do, no matter how bleak or frightening our prospects, each and every one of us, each and every day, lies in the same safe and impregnable place—in the hollow of God's hand.

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