

Anchor the Storm

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[0 : 00] Thank you, Brian. Thank you, Brian. Amen. Someone once said that in life, it often seems like we're either entering a storm, we're in the midst of a storm, or maybe we're coming out of a storm.

Here in the Carolinas, we are well acquainted with storms, are we not? 1996, my wife and I were living in Westbrook. I went to bed September 5th, knowing that a hurricane was coming and going to hit the outer banks of North Carolina, never expecting that the eye of the storm would go over Wake Forest, North Carolina, where we were living.

We woke up about 3 in the morning to be in the midst of a hurricane. And it feels like often life can feel that way. And certainly at a time like this, as what we've been through as a church and as a family these last several days, can feel a bit like a storm.

And I want to spend just a few moments in the Word of God, just reminding one another, by God's Word, of what you and I are anchored to. Because here's the truth.

Giving our lives to Jesus and follow Him doesn't mean we will live a storm-free life. But what it does mean is that Jesus is in the boat with us. Amen? There's an old country song, and the woman singing to her romantic love interest says, I beg your pardon, I never promised you a...

[1 : 34] Oh, you've dated yourself. Never promised you a rose garden. The Christian life, it is roses, but at times it's thorns, is it not? And I want us to spend just a very brief time together in the Word of God, being encouraged by God's Word, of what you and I are anchored to in the midst of a storm.

So I want to invite you to open your Bible to the book of Habakkuk. It's in the Old Testament, maybe a book you're not as familiar with, so take a moment and find the book of Habakkuk.

And we're going to look at Habakkuk chapter 3. Habakkuk chapter 3. And as you turn there, I'll set the context for us. Habakkuk is a prophet of God to God's people, to the nation of Judah.

And actually, this little three-chapter book of Habakkuk goes really well with the book of Job.

Because Habakkuk is going to begin to ask the Lord, Lord, why do we go through challenging times?

As the people of God, Lord, why do bad things happen to your people? Why do you allow suffering and challenges and storms to come into the lives of your people?

[2 : 49] And he has this brief three-chapter conversation with the Lord about going through challenging times. And the pinnacle of the conversation between Habakkuk and the Lord is what we're going to look at.

And it's in chapter 3, beginning in verse 17. And this is what he writes. He says, Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fall, 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. I will take joy in the God of my salvation, for God the Lord is my strength. He makes my feet like the deer's, and he makes me tread on my high places.

Let's pray together. Lord Jesus, we are moved this morning by your goodness and your faithfulness and your grace.

And we are reminded that in the midst of the fiercest storm, you are with your people. You never leave us nor forsake us. And in these next few moments, as we look into your word, we ask, Holy Spirit, that you would open our minds, give us understanding of your word.

[4 : 15] We pray, Holy Spirit, that you would soften our hearts, that we might be changed and transformed by your word. Speak to us, your people, we pray in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. If we look at verse 17, Habakkuk outlines for you and I the dire situation. That God's people find themselves in.

Notice what he says in verse 17. He says, Though the fig tree should not blossom. Figs would be a source of food for God's people at that time. And so he says, The fig tree does not blossom, so there's nothing to eat.

He says, Nor fruit be on the vines. He's referring to grapes there. And of course, they would take grapes and press them and make juice and wine. And so he says, There's nothing to eat.

There's nothing to drink. The fig tree does not blossom. There is no fruit on the vines. Watch this.

He says, The produce of the olive fails. Now they would take olives and press them into olive oil, which primarily they would use to light their homes.

[5 : 22] They would put in lamps. So stay with me. He says, There's nothing to eat. There's nothing to drink. And they've turned the power off. He says, The fields yield no food. He emphasizes that again.

He says, The flock be cut off from the fold. It's referring to sheep. And the primary function of sheep in that day would be they would shear them, take the wool, and make clothing.

He says, There's nothing to eat. There's nothing to drink. They've turned off the power and all of my clothes are gone. And then he says, And there be no herd in the stalls.

He's referring to oxen that they would use to work the land. So listen to his predicament. He says, I have nothing to eat. I have nothing to drink. I have nothing to wear.

They've turned the power off and I've lost my job. Sounds like a country music song, does it not?

He's lost everything. But notice this one little word in verse 18.

[6 : 19] He says, Yet. Yet in the midst of losing everything, in the midst of the biggest storm, what does he do? He says, I will rejoice in the Lord.

He says, I've lost everything and I'm going to choir practice. And it would be fair to say, but Habakkuk, what do you have to think about? And he says, I have three truths that anchor me in the midst of difficult times.

And here they are for us, church. Number one, in times of hardship and difficulty, we're reminded that God is our source of salvation. In times of hardship and difficulty, we are reminded that God is our source of salvation.

Look what he says there in verse 18. He says, Yet I will rejoice in the Lord. I will take joy in the God of my salvation. The God of my salvation.

The apostle Paul says, To live is Christ and to die is what? Gain. To live is Christ and to die is gain.

[7 : 27] See, for those of us who know and love and follow Jesus, even death has been conquered by the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen, church? And so death has no hold on the people of God.

And so he says, Listen, in the midst of hard times and difficulties, never lose sight that God is your source of salvation. And this life is but a vapor.

This life is but a vapor. Daniel and I have been, as we would say in England, we have been best mates since the age of 16. Now, you know how it works.

In my mind, Daniel and I are still 16. Right? When I saw that video, I just chuckled. Brian told me this morning, he said, Oh, Daniel's made a video. And I literally busted out laughing.

I was like, Listen, a heart attack's not going to stop that man from talking. Amen? It's not going to do it. Right? I've known him my whole life. Here's what we know.

[8 : 26] Is that life goes by quickly. One moment you're 16 and the next moment you're 56. Right? Our life is but a vapor. But salvation in Jesus is for an eternity.

Amen, church? It's for an eternity. And so, when the storms are brewing, when the waves are crashing, what do we have to sing about? I'll tell you what, we have something to sing about for all eternity.

And that is, we have a home in glory land that outshines the sun. Do you know that song? I've got a home in glory land. If I had a banjo, I'd start picking it. Amen? Right? And we've got a home in glory land that outshines the sun.

And for that and that alone, we have all eternity to worship Jesus. In the midst of the storm, we hold on to the truth that God is our source of salvation.

Death has no hold on the people of God. Secondly, he says this, in the midst of challenging hard times, we are anchored to the truth that God is our source of salvation.

[9 : 32] But secondly, we're anchored to the truth that God is our source of strength. God is our source of strength. Look what he says there. Verse 18, he says, Yet I will rejoice in the Lord.

I will take joy in the God of my salvation. God the Lord is my what? Strength. God the Lord is my strength.

In the midst of trying times, we worship Jesus for his salvation, but we are reminded that not only is he our source of salvation, he is our source of strength.

The word there in Hebrew means the force of an army. The force of an army. There are many names for God in the Old Testament, and one is the Lord of hosts. It literally means the Lord of heaven's armies.

That all the armies of heaven are at our disposal as we are strengthened by God himself. And it's lovely because he says, The Lord is my strength.

[10 : 35] And the word Lord there is the personal name for God. It's Yahweh. It's this personal God who knows us and loves us and knows the very number of hairs on our head and cares for us.

And he is our strength. Have you ever faced a trial in life and you just didn't know if you were going to make it through? Have you ever cried out to the Lord and said, Lord, I don't know if I can take it one more day.

Lord, I'm not sure if our marriage can bear this. I'm not sure if our children will make it through this. Lord, I'm not sure how we're going to endure this.

Can I just say, take heart. Take heart. The Apostle Paul writing of his own storm in 2 Corinthians chapter 12, said he called out to the Lord three times to remove it from him.

This is the answer the Lord gave him. He said, Oh, Paul, don't you know that my grace is sufficient for you for my power is made perfect in weakness.

[11 : 48] And Paul says, for when I am weak, then I am strong. Do you know it's okay to be weak? It's okay to cry.

It's okay to not have all the answers. It's okay. Because Jesus does. Amen, church? And the Bible says, when we are weak, that's when he is strong.

And in fact, I would go on to say, I just believe the weaker I get, the stronger he gets in me. And maybe you've had that experience where you've looked back on those storms in your own life and you don't even recollect how the Lord did it, but what you know is that he carried you every step of the way.

He carried you every step of the way. He is our source of salvation. He is our source of strength.

But then lastly, church, we see this in times of hardship and difficulty.

God is our source of security. God is our source of security. Look at verse 19 again. He says, God, the Lord, is my strength and he makes my feet like the deers, like the feet of a deer, and he makes me tread on my high places.

[13 : 03] The word deer there is more akin to what we would think of as a mountain goat. Now, we don't have many of those. At Table Rock, you have to go more out west, Wyoming or Montana or somewhere like that.

And a mountain goat is a spectacular animal. They live in an altitude usually of about 13,000 feet. They're the largest living animal at that altitude.

And if you've ever seen a nature documentary of mountain goats, they have this ability to climb near vertical cliffs. And their security, the way they're able to get away from their predators, they're not poisonous, they don't have big horns, they're not very fast, but what they can do is they can climb. And their security is in their feet. They know they can go places that their enemy can't. They know they can go places that their enemy can't.

Those that are hunting them. A mountain lion can't climb like a mountain goat. And so David here is saying that just like that mountain goat finds its security in its feet, look what he says.

[14 : 11] He says, the Lord makes my feet like the feet of the mountain goat. He makes me tread on the high places. He's talking about being secure in the Lord.

Being secure in the Lord. The Lord is our salvation, He is our strength, and He is our security. David says it this way in Psalm 91.

He says, whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. And I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress, my God in whom I trust.

Our security as followers of Jesus is not in the stock market, it's not in the bank, it's not in the White House. Our security is firmly placed at the foot of the cross.

Amen, church? And it's in Christ and Christ alone that we find our security. So let me encourage us this morning.

[15 : 13] Wherever you might be, maybe things for you this morning are smooth sailing and praise the Lord and make sure you praise Him for that. But maybe for you the waters are a bit choppy.

Maybe things are not as you would like them to be and you find yourself in the midst of a storm. Can I encourage you to rejoice? To rejoice? Can I encourage you to be reminded that even in the biggest challenge that the Lord Jesus is your salvation, He is your strength and He is your security. We have two children. Our daughter is 22 and our son is 20. And we've spent most, they spent most of their lives in England.

We've been living overseas for 18 years now. We spent 17 years of that living in Birmingham, England. And when our kids were quite little, our son was probably about four years old, we went to go do a fun day out as a family.

And we went up to the mountains and there's a place there not far from our home called the Heights of Abraham. And it's an old lead mine and it's about 4,000 feet up and you have to ride a chairlift.

[16 : 31] We ride this chairlift up and we spend the day taking a tour of this mine. So we're about 500 feet underground in the earth and we have hard hats on with lights and we're taking this tour of this lead mine.

And there's about 20 people in our tour group and we're at the deepest part of the mine and the tour guide says, look, I'm going to instruct them to turn the lights off and you're going to turn your lights off and I want you to appreciate just how dark it would be if you were a miner here in the 1800s.

And as soon as he said that, I thought, where is Max? That's our son. Now Max is a four-year-old full of life and energy. He was climbing stalactites and hanging from stalagmites or whatever you do on those things, running everywhere around this mine and I immediately thought, where is Max?

And as soon as the thought hit my mind, the lights went out. And I've never experienced that level of darkness. Didn't know it existed.

500 feet underground in the middle of the earth, no natural light. You couldn't see a thing and as a dad, my heart was beating out of my chest.

[17 : 43] And I'm thinking, has he fallen? What has happened? Because I hear nothing. And in the midst of the darkness, I feel five little fingers grab my hand and pull me down.

And I came down and in my ear, I hear this, Dada, is that you? I said, yes son, it's me. And he said, then I'm going to be okay.

I'm going to be okay. Maybe this morning you need to reach out. Take the hand of your Heavenly Father and say, Dad, is that you?

And he'll say, yes it is. And I promise you, you're going to be okay. Let me pray for us. Lord Jesus, we love you. We praise you.

We thank you for your word. God, I just pray for one who would be here this morning who find themselves in the midst of a trial, of a storm, of a hardship.

[18 : 56] I pray that this morning they would reach out, take your hand, and that they would know they're going to be okay.

Okay. Bless us, your people. We humbly ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Let's stand together.

We're going to sing and Jeff is here. If you'd like to come and speak to him to pray however the Lord leads and you obey as we sing together.