

Habakkuk 3:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation.

Analysis

Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation. After describing total catastrophic loss, Habakkuk makes this stunning declaration of faith—"Yet I will rejoice." The Hebrew "Yet" (וְאַנְיִ) is emphatic and contrastive, setting up the radical difference between circumstances and response. Despite everything, in defiance of all evidence, the prophet chooses joy.

"I will rejoice" (אֶלְזָה/e'elozah) uses a strong verb indicating exuberant, triumphant joy—not stoic resignation but active celebration. This isn't gritting one's teeth through hardship but genuine delight. The parallel "I will joy" (אֶגְלָה/agilah) intensifies the emotion—spinning, dancing joy. Both verbs are volitional futures—Habakkuk chooses this response; it's not automatic or emotional manipulation but deliberate decision grounded in truth.

"In the LORD" (בְּיְהֹוָה/ba-YHWH) reveals the object of joy—not in circumstances, achievements, or possessions, but in God Himself. The covenant name YHWH emphasizes God's faithful, unchanging character. When everything else fails, God remains. This is joy that transcends circumstances because it's rooted in the eternal, immutable nature of God rather than temporal blessings.

"The God of my salvation" (בְּאֱלֹהֵי יִשְׁעִ) grounds this joy in God's saving work. Despite present suffering, Habakkuk knows God is his deliverer. Salvation here encompasses more than spiritual redemption—it includes rescue, deliverance, vindication, and ultimate restoration. This confidence looks beyond

immediate circumstances to God's ultimate purposes and final victory. For Christians, this points to the gospel—ultimate joy in Christ's saving work regardless of present suffering.

Historical Context

Habakkuk's declaration of joy despite total loss became a model for Jewish faithfulness during the Babylonian exile. With temple destroyed, land lost, and no visible signs of God's presence, the exiles had to choose whether to trust God's character or abandon faith. Many maintained worship through synagogues (which emerged during exile), preserved Scripture, and held fast to covenant hope despite circumstances.

This passage anticipates the New Testament theology of suffering and joy. Paul and Silas sang hymns in prison after being beaten (Acts 16:25). Paul wrote his epistle on joy (Philippians) from prison. James declared believers should consider trials "pure joy" (James 1:2). Peter taught that believers rejoice even in suffering (1 Peter 1:6-8). Early Christians facing persecution embodied Habakkuk's declaration.

Throughout church history, believers have testified to this supernatural joy in suffering. Polycarp praised God as he was martyred. John Bunyan wrote Pilgrim's Progress in prison. Richard Wurmbrand survived communist torture camps singing praise to God. Modern persecuted churches worldwide embody Habakkuk 3:18, demonstrating that joy in God transcends all earthly circumstances. This is supernatural, Spirit-given joy that testifies to the reality of God's presence.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How can you cultivate joy in God Himself rather than joy dependent on circumstances, relationships, health, or success?
2. What does it reveal about God's character that He is worthy of worship even when He allows or ordains suffering in our lives?
3. How does the cross of Christ enable believers to rejoice in suffering, knowing that God works all things for the good of those who love Him?
4. What practices or spiritual disciplines help you maintain joy in God during seasons of loss, disappointment, or unanswered prayer?
5. How does your joy (or lack thereof) during trials testify to watching unbelievers about where you find ultimate satisfaction and security?

Interlinear Text

וְשָׁעִי בְּאָלֹהִים אֶגְיָלָה וְבִיהָנָה אֶעֱלָזָה בְּיַהֲנָה הַאֲנָה יְהָנָה

Additional Cross-References

Job 13:15 (Parallel theme): Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him.

Micah 7:7 (Salvation): Therefore I will look unto the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me.

Philippians 4:4 (References Lord): Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice.

Isaiah 61:10 (Salvation): I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.

Isaiah 12:2 (Salvation): Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation.

Psalms 25:5 (Salvation): Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day.

Psalms 27:1 (Salvation): The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

Exodus 15:2 (Salvation): The LORD is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him.

1 Samuel 2:1 (Salvation): And Hannah prayed, and said, My heart rejoiceth in the LORD, mine horn is exalted in the LORD: my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies; because I rejoice in thy salvation.

1 Peter 1:8 (Parallel theme): Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:

From KJV Study • kjvstudy.org