

## Unconditional Thanksgiving Habakkuk 3:17-19

### **Slide 1**

In the spring of 1621, after having landed at Plymouth and survived the first hard winter, the Pilgrims weren't doing very well. Many died during the winter.

Two Native Americans named Squanto and Samoset helped the Pilgrims learn how to survive in the new land by showing them farming techniques and teaching them how to gather certain natural foods from the forest.

By the fall things had greatly improved, and the Pilgrims had such an abundance of food that they decided to celebrate with a feast of thanksgiving. The Pilgrims celebrated by giving thanks unto God for His provisions.

Today, Thanksgiving appears to be the only time that some people give Him thanks; but the Lord wants us to thank Him each and every day of our lives.

At all times, and in every situation of life, God wants us to do as Paul said in Ephesians 5:20, in which he declared, *“always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

Think for a moment. Is our thanksgiving rooted in an overwhelming praise unto God for our salvation, or is our thanks rooted in earthly things?

Do we actually rejoice in the God of our salvation as our strength?

The question is really this: If the worst thing we could possibly imagine were to become true for us today, could we say like Habakkuk, *“yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior?”*

The Thanksgiving holiday can be a misleading time, since many people think that this is the only time to give thanks unto God.

We need to understand that Thanksgiving isn't just a day, but a lifestyle. It's the life that we're called to live in Jesus Christ.

If we say, "thank you" and put on a thankful appearance only on one day, that one day is not an accurate representation of our lives. We're not being truthful before God.

We should be thankful each and every day! If our thankfulness is rooted only in God's "gifts," but not in God "Himself," then our thanksgiving is shallow and superficial.

We must learn to rejoice in the Lord and take joy in the God of our salvation. We must learn to give thanks always in all things. Our thanksgiving must be rooted in God Himself.

The prophet Habakkuk provides us with an example of someone who understood "*unconditional thanksgiving*," which is the kind of thanksgiving we should demonstrate.

So, let's see what we can learn from Habakkuk, a man of great faith, concerning giving thanks unto God.

## **Slide 2**

Habakkuk 3:17-19, *"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, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior. The Sovereign Lord is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to tread on the heights."*

Before I get started, we need to understand the context behind what the prophet was saying.

Warren Wiersbe said, *“This is one of the greatest confessions of faith found anywhere in the Scripture. Habakkuk has faced the frightening fact that his nation will be invaded by a merciless enemy [which is Babylon].*

*The prophet knows that many of the people will go into exile and many will be slain. The land will be ruined, and Jerusalem and the temple will be destroyed. Yet, he tells God that he will trust Him no matter what happens!”*

If Habakkuk had depended on his feelings, he would’ve never made this great confession of faith. When Habakkuk looked ahead, he saw a nation headed for destruction and that frightened him.

When he looked within, he saw himself trembling with fear. When he looked around, he saw everything in the economy about to fall apart, but when he looked up by faith, he saw God, and all his fears vanished.

We see that Habakkuk was thankful to the Lord even though there would be a lack of food, and his physical needs might not be met. These verses represent unconditional thanksgiving!

The word “unconditional” means not dependent on, or conditioned by any external thing, but means rooted in God alone, rooted in the experience of the wonder of salvation.

Our thanksgiving unto the Lord should be unconditional, just as God’s love for His people is unconditional. God’s love for Israel was definitely unconditional, as is His love for us.

Deuteronomy 7:7-8, *“The Lord did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. But it was because the Lord loved you and kept the oath he swore to your ancestors that he brought you*

*out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt.”*

The Lord didn't deliver Israel from Egypt because He was pleased with the amount of people since Israel wasn't that great in number at that time.

He chose Israel because He was faithful to the promise He had made that He would make Israel a great nation. God is always faithful and ever loving.

We need to be consistent and faithful in giving thanks unto the Lord, because He's consistent and faithful in loving us like an evergreen tree.

An evergreen tree is always green despite the changes in weather around it. It's green in the heat of summer as well as the cold of winter.

Our lives are to be characterized like this... by an enduring thankfulness that's unaffected by the changes around us.

When the heat of a pressured week or deadly cold of pain strikes us, we should always be thankful, regardless of that which surrounds us.

### **Slide 3**

The thanksgiving of which Habakkuk spoke was a thanksgiving which wasn't dependent upon any object, thing, or circumstance, but finds its source in God alone.

It wasn't dependent upon the things that God has given, but upon who God is.

Habakkuk was saying, *“Even if all my worldly comforts were taken away and God allowed my life to become desolate of any earthly ease, yet I will rejoice in the Lord. I will joy in the God of my salvation. I will return to His presence with thanks.”*

He was proclaiming that his thanksgiving wouldn't be infrequent. It wouldn't be shallow.

It wouldn't only be given when things were agreeable and comfortable. It would be always!

His thanksgiving would be rooted in a profound, personal, and real experience of God's salvation and God's present strength.

I love that song by Matt and Beth Redman that the Praise Team sang earlier, *“Blessed Be Your Name.”* Did you listen to the words?

*“Blessed be Your name in the land that is plentiful;  
where Your streams of abundance flow, blessed be Your name.  
Blessed be Your name when I'm found in the desert place;  
though I walk through the wilderness, blessed be Your name.  
Every blessing You pour out I'll turn back to praise.  
When the darkness closes in Lord still I will say,  
Blessed be the name of the Lord  
[When] You give and take away,  
My heart will choose to say, Lord blessed be Your name.”*

The inspiration for this song came from Job, where he declared in Job 1:21, *“Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised.”*

Habakkuk spoke not merely of the loss of everyday comforts, but of the very supports of his earthly life.

Using the language of the agriculture of his day, he imagined one of the darkest pictures a person could possibly know.

He said, "*Though the fig tree does not bud,*" the fig was a staple food for them; "*though the olive crop fails,*" the olive tree brought oil for cooking.

"*And the fields produce no food,*" there was no corn, barley, or wheat to be brought to the storage bins; "*though there are no sheep in the pen,*" sheep, which would give them wool and meat, would not be in existence.

"*And no cattle in the stalls,*" the barns would be empty and the livestock dead or gone.

He imagined complete economic ruin. Disasters and circumstances leading to famine, hunger, crying children, and malnutrition.

He was talking about the total collapse of the economy, somewhat similar to the Great Depression, but more severe.

Americans have so much today that there's no telling how they'd respond if another Depression were to strike; and though we've seen a "recession," hopefully we'll never have to see another Depression.

Habakkuk basically said, "*Although my job would be gone; my income cut off; my ability to provide one mouthful of food taken away, and my health gone; yet, I will rejoice in the Lord. I will joy in the God of my salvation.*"

Bible commentator Matthew Henry, after being robbed once, wrote in his diary the following message about thankfulness: "*Let me be thankful. First, because I was never robbed before. Second, because although they took my wallet, they did not take my life.*"

*Third, because although they took my all, it was not much. Fourth, because it was I who was robbed, not I who robbed.”*

In Psalm 51:12 David said, *“Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation.”* Are you thankful unto God for your salvation, or are you thankful only for what He gives you in terms of this life, i.e. material things, and so forth?

Now, don't misunderstand what I'm saying. We must be thankful for His gifts so abundantly bestowed on us: water, food, jobs, clothes, cars, income, our health.

God gives it all. None of it really comes by our own efforts. It's all *“given to us”* and we're supposed to thank God, Who has placed into our hands everything we have.

Absolutely everything comes to us from God. Our thanksgiving, if it's to be true and lasting, must go deeper.

Our thanksgiving must be *“in”* the God Who has given all. It must ultimately be a profound thanks unto God for His salvation, for His grace to you and me.

So, how should we thank Him? Well, let's look at Habakkuk. Habakkuk's thanksgiving had no reservations in it. There's no part, which says, *“Well, we better not get too excited about this.”*

Come what may, we should declare, *“I will rejoice. I will joy in the God of my salvation.”* The word *“rejoice”* means a leap for joy.

Habakkuk said, *“He makes my feet like deer's feet, the feet of a deer that is swift and leaps through the air, whose spirit soars.”*

Then he says, *“I will walk upon the high hills”* or mountains. The idea here is calmness, rest and serenity, looking over all the land in victory.

He was speaking of an abundant, spiritual joy, unquenchable and victorious.

## **Slide 4**

### Conclusion

That's why we must ask ourselves this morning, do we know God? Do we know His salvation that's freely given?

Is the Lord God our strength? Do we belong unto Him by having salvation through Jesus Christ? If so, then what situation is there in which we cannot praise Him? In Jesus Christ our feet run upon the high places.

Are we actually thankful always, in all things? You see, thanksgiving is born in one place. It is born when God has shown us that we're sinners, and we realize His amazing love and grace.

We sometimes say that a person can't be thankful until he or she knows what it's like to be without. This is so true.

One can't be thankful until he or she realizes that we're all sinners destined to die an eternal death in hell; and then coming to find that we've been saved by grace because Jesus died for our sins on the cross.

One cannot be thankful until a person knows their sin and then experiences God's amazing love and undeserved forgiveness.

Then, in knowing God and knowing His Son, Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, there's absolutely no condition which can ever come upon us where we cannot praise the Lord and take joy in the God of our salvation.