

Crossroads Baptist Church
November 11, 2007 10:00
Habakkuk 3:17-19
Habakkuk Series #11

“Living in the High Places”

Many of you have heard the story of John Newton who lived in the 1700s. He was a former slave ship captain who was converted at the age of 23 and ultimately became a pastor, a poet, a hymn writer. He’s best known for which hymn? "Amazing Grace." It has become immortalized.

John Newton met Mary Catlett when they were both still teenagers and he was unconverted. Then in his early 20s, he came to know Christ. His life was transformed. About two years after his conversion, these two who had fallen in love as teenagers were finally married.

Mary and John loved each other passionately, and they had an extraordinary marriage by all accounts. Newton could never imagine living without Mary, so he always assumed that he would die first.

However, Mary was stricken with cancer. After a long struggle, she finally died on Wednesday night, December 15, 1790, with her husband standing at her side holding a candle in his hand. They had been married for 40 years, and it had been an incredible marriage.

The following Sunday, just four days later, John Newton went up to the pulpit of his church in London. I’m sure, as you can imagine, his congregation must have been wondering what will he preach? His beloved Mary has just died. What text will he choose? What will he preach on today?

He choose this text.

God has a high place for us.

Isaiah 40:30-31 “Even youths grow tired and weary and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.”

Duet. 32:13 “He made him to ride on the high places of the earth.”

Psalms 18: 32-33 “It is God who arms me with strength and makes my way perfect. He makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to stand on the heights.”

This verse is repeated three times in the OT.

I. Living in the High Places is a God-centered life.

38 times in this chapter God is referenced. In these three verses of our text, God is mentioned three times. Habakkuk has now become “God-centered.”

Genesis 1:1 the Bible begins with God, not man.

Isaiah 43:7 “everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.”

Col 1:16 “all things were created by Him and for Him.”

II. Living in the High Places is a life of worship.

A. Worship is not contingent on what is happening in our life.

Habakkuk’s circumstances has not changed. The Chaldeans are still coming and soon Judah will be destroyed, the land will be laid waste, and the economy will be in shambles.

The fig tree will not blossom because it will be pulled up by its roots.
The fields will not produce because they will be burned.
The flocks and herds will be killed.

Life is still very difficult for him.

Life is tough and we all live with a hope that things will get better. We hope the financial problems will turn around, that the kids will get right with God, that the spouse will change.

But the high place with God is not a rejoicing that all of these things have changed. Anybody can rejoice and be glad when there is plenty of money in the bank, when everyone is well and liking one another.

If Horatio G. Spafford had waited for everything to have been well in his life then we would have never had the great hymn “It is Well with my soul.” He wrote that song after having received news that his family had been lost at sea.

We may not know a lot about stalls, fig trees, but what about this:

Jim Law, who pastors a church in Gonzales, LA said this after Katrina:

Though Wal-Mart shelves are empty and there is no food in Winn-Dixie, though all the restaurants remain closed and though the mall should shut down and the stock market crash and the hospitals be no more. Though my wife should contract cancer

or my child be ravaged by childhood disease or kidnapped without a trace. And though my home be decimated by an act of God, yet I will rejoice in the God of my salvation.

And you might add to that list: Though I still have arthritis or cancer. Though my husband is still having health issues, though we are still waiting for a better job, Though my son is still in the homosexual lifestyle or whatever it might be on your list. *Now*, not later when it gets resolved, not down the road when circumstances change, but right *now* I will rejoice. I will take joy in the God of my salvation.

B. Worship is based on the consistence of who God is.

The passage begins with “though” in verse 17 but turns on “yet” in verse 18.

King Jehoshaphat was surrounded by an enemy, but yet he was able to rejoice because the battle’s was the Lord.

Daniel 3: 17-18

Paul and Silas in the jail

III. Living in the High Places is the highest mark of true Christian maturity.

This is the high place where God wants us all.

A deer is an easy target for the arrows of its enemies until it gets to the mountains where its surefootness makes it almost impossible to catch and defeat.

The great British expositor G. Campbell Morgan said, “Our joy is in proportion to our trust. Our trust is in proportion to our knowledge of God.”

Warren Wiersbe calls this “the greatest confession of faith found in Scripture.”

Do you remember that old hymn?

*I'm pressing on the upward way,
New heights I'm gaining every day.
Still praying as I'm onward bound,
"Lord, plant my feet on higher ground."*

*My heart has no desire to stay,
Where doubts arise and fears dismay.
Though some may dwell where these abound,
My prayer, my aim is higher ground.*

*I want to live above the world,
Though Satan's darts at me are hurled.
For faith has caught the joyful sound,
The song of saints on higher ground.*

*I want to scale the utmost height,
And catch a gleam of glory bright.
But still I'll pray until heaven I'm found,
"Lord, lead me on to higher ground."*

And then that chorus:

*Lord, lift me up, and let me stand
By faith on heaven's table land.
A higher plane than I have found,
Lord, plant my feet on higher ground.*

Would you go with God to the higher plane?