

# The Victory of Faith

by Chuck Smith

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*Faith is trusting God even when we don't understand His ways, and it leads to rejoicing in Him even in the midst of hopelessness.*

**Duration:** 38:37

**Scripture:** Exodus 12:21-23, Habakkuk 1:2, Habakkuk 2:4, Habakkuk 3:17-18, Matthew 17:20, Hebrews 11:1, James 1:2-4

**Topics:** "Victory"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the challenges and injustices faced in a society filled with gang warfare and corruption in the legal system. The speaker shares a personal experience of being falsely sued for slander and emphasizes the importance of including God in our reasoning and understanding of difficult situations. The sermon highlights the need for faith and trust in God's plan, even when we don't understand it. The speaker encourages listeners to commit their ways to the Lord and trust in His perfect will, reminding them that God is in control and will work things out for His glory and their good.

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## Transcript

Shall we turn now in our Bibles to the book of Hebrews chapter 11. For our scripture reading we'll read the first 28 verses of Hebrews 11. I'll read the first and the odd-numbered, Pastor Brian will lead the congregation in reading the even-numbered as we stand to read the Word of God.

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for. The evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report.

And through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which do appear. By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts, and by it he being dead yet speaketh. By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death, and was not found because God had translated him.

But before his translation he had this testimony that he pleased God. But without faith it is impossible to please him, for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. By faith Noah being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house, by which he condemned the world, and became the heir of the righteousness which is by faith.

By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should receive for an inheritance, obeyed, and he went out not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in a land of promise, as in a strange country dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise. For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

And through faith also Sarah herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was fast age, because she judged him faithful who had promised. Therefore spring there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the seashore innumerable. These all died in faith, not having received the promise, but having seen them afar off, were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country, and truly if they have been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is in heavenly, wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he hath prepared for them a city. And by faith Abraham when he was tried offered up Isaac, and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said that in Isaac shall thy seed be called, accounting that God was able to raise him up even from the dead, from whence also he had received him in a figure.

By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come. And by faith Jacob when he was dying blessed both the sons of Joseph, and worshipped leaning upon the top of his staff. By faith Joseph when he died made mention of the departing of the children of Israel, and gave commandment concerning his bones.

By faith Moses when he was born was hid for three months by his parents, because they saw that he was a proper child, and they were not afraid of the king's commandment. By faith Moses when he was come to years refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt, for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.

And by faith he forsook Egypt not fearing the wrath of the king, for he endured as seeing the invisible. Through faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them. Let's pray.

Father, as we read the exploits by these men of faith and women of faith, when we realize the potential of faith, when we realize the peace that a person who walks by faith can experience, with your disciples, Lord, we do pray, increase our faith. Help us, Lord, that we might put our trust and faith fully in you, knowing that in time you will work out your perfect eternal purpose in our lives. So let faith have her perfect work in us.

In Jesus name we pray. Amen. And you may be seated.

The book of Habakkuk is a book that you might say the major theme of it is found in the second chapter, where the Lord says to Habakkuk, the just shall live by faith. Habakkuk, there are things that you don't understand, will not understand, but you're going to have to trust me. This declaration that God gave to Habakkuk, the just shall live by faith, inspired Paul the apostle, brought him out of a works religion into a real faith in Jesus Christ.

What it did for Paul the apostle, it also did for Martin Luther, the message, the just shall live by faith resonated. And he saw God and the righteousness of God as something that is not attainable by our efforts, but it is imputed to us by our faith in Jesus Christ. And really that was the real thrust of the reformation.

But in this book of Habakkuk, he opens the book with expressions of frustration and confusion. There in chapter one, verse two, he said, Oh Lord, how long shall I cry? And you do not hear. I cry to you because of the violence.

And yet things are not changed. He had been very concerned about the moral breakdown that he had seen there in the society in which he was living. And he was crying out to God and praying about these terrible lapses of morality among the leadership, among the nation, among the people.

And it was though God wasn't hearing his prayers because rather than changes being made for the better, they were being made for the worse. Have you ever had a problem where you were praying and asking God to help? And it seemed like God was deaf. It seemed like God wasn't listening to your prayer.

In fact, maybe the situation even got worse. And you wondered, Lord, how long will I cry? And you don't answer me. You know, the silence of heaven is a very difficult experience.

When it seems like God isn't answering, it is a real test of faith. Can I go on continuing to trust the Lord when it appears that he isn't answering my prayers? Here the nation was going down morally, spiritually. The prophet was concerned.

The ungodly seemed to be prevailing, and God was silent. If I were God, I would do things differently. I wouldn't let the wicked get by with their wickedness.

I would see that they were taken care of quickly, and I would have very little mercy on the wicked. But as Habakkuk is observing the situation, the scene, it had become a very violent society. There were those that were raising strifes and contentions.

There were gang warfare, gang-controlled neighborhoods. The legal system seemed to be corrupted, and thus the enforcement of the law became very slack. Oh, a little over a month ago, I had a frivolous lawsuit filed against me.

I had to go to court over it. Some woman listening to K-Wave thought that I was talking about her. She sued me for slander, for destroying her reputation over the radio.

I never met the lady. I didn't know the lady. I didn't meet her until the court date, and I had to sit through court all day waiting for our case to be called.

It was a good education. I got to see justice in action. When our case was finally called, toward the end of the day, immediately the judge dismissed it because she had absolutely no evidence, and you know, there was nothing there.

But nonetheless, I got a good education. But the case just before ours, I was quite interested in. An officer over in Orange saw a car pulling out of a parking lot of a local bar.

He noticed that there was no license plate on the front of the car, so he pulled it over. As he was questioning the occupant of the car, he smelled alcohol on their breath, and so he gave them a sobriety

test, which they failed, and thus he filed a DUI. And now the case is before the judge, and the attorney defending the defendant made the point that the officer really did not have real cause to pull the driver over.

And because he lacked a real cause to pull the driver over, he then was improper in questioning the driver, smelling the alcohol. You see, he shouldn't have pulled the driver over to begin with, and the judge dismissed the case, and you saw the officer walk out with a disappointment on his face with the justice system. Because it was ruled that there was not justified cause for pulling the car over, there was no further case against the defendant.

Habakkuk was observing such things, a real breakdown in the justice system, and he was troubled by it. He said, Lord, why is it that you allow me to see these things? I would rather be ignorant. Ignorant is bliss, but knowing these things, and you not doing anything about it, I can't handle it.

You know, it's like you read in the Reader's Digest of some corrupt system within the government and all, and you think, hmm, but what can you do? You feel so helpless, so frustrated by what you're observing of the whole breakdown of our morality within our society, and you feel so helpless to stop it. Habakkuk said, I'd rather not know it, because I'm disturbed. It just distresses me to see these things, to pray about them, and yet, Lord, it doesn't seem like you're doing anything.

So the Lord responded to this frustrated prophet. He said, Habakkuk, I am doing a work, and if I told you what I was doing, you wouldn't believe it. Habakkuk, I am raising up Babylon and the army of Babylon, and they're going to come, and they're going to destroy this city, and they're going to take captives back to Babylon.

Habakkuk said, I can't believe you. They're so wicked. We're bad.

They're worse. I can't understand why you would use a nation as wicked as they are to defeat us. And thus, he had a real problem with God's answer to the prayers that God would do something to bring changes within the community.

He said, they worship false gods. If you give them the victory, they're going to burn incense and alter their gods, and they're going to attribute their gods for their victory. They're going to think that their gods are greater than you.

Why would you use them as your instrument of judgment? So the prophet said, I don't understand. I'm just going to go, and I'm going to sit in the tower, and I'm just going to wait and watch to see what you will do, and to hear you when you rebuke me, you know, to find out what you're going to say. So the prophet went on into the tower and waited.

And while he was there, the word of the Lord came to him. And the word of the Lord was saying to him, things are going to get worse, Habakkuk, before they get better. You're just going to have to trust me and have faith in me.

For the just shall live by faith. You don't understand, and you won't understand what I'm doing, but trust me, I know what I'm doing. Just trust.

So the prophet expresses the faith that he developed in the work of God there in chapter three. He said, I heard what you said. I'm terrified.

I don't understand what you're doing, but keep doing it. That's faith. When God assures you that he is working, you can't see the evidence of God's work yet.

But you put your faith so much in God, that like Habakkuk, you say, you say that you're working, I don't understand it, I can't see it, but don't stop. That phrase, keep alive or revive thy work, in the midst of the years, remember mercy. The revive is keep alive your work.

Don't stop working God. Even though I don't understand it, keep doing it. But don't forget mercy in what you are doing.

Though I might complain, Lord, don't listen to my complaints. You keep working. Oftentimes our problems arise because there is a difference between my reasoning and it's in conflict with my faith.

But my reason is often flawed because I do not always possess all of the facts. I often have drawn conclusions from false evidence. I have found that I've taken action as a result of a lie that someone has told me.

And when I heard all of the evidence, I found that my first conclusions were wrong. My reasoning was based upon insufficient evidence. I think in the Old Testament, the story of Jacob, he had 12 sons, but his favorite son was Joseph, who was second from the youngest.

He had given to Joseph a beautiful coat, and he definitely favored him. And one day he sent Joseph out to give a report on his brothers who were out watching their sheep. When his brothers saw them coming, they were jealous of him.

He had had dreams in which he saw himself as ruling over them. And they said, here comes the dreamer. Let's kill him and we'll see what happens to his dreams.

So as Joseph came, they threw him into a pit, gonna let him just starve to death. But as they were sitting there eating their lunch, and he was crying and saying, get me out of here. What are you doing? And all they saw a caravan heading toward Egypt, slave traders.

So they decided, Hey, why don't we sell him? So they sold Joseph to these slave traders. And as he was being taken to Egypt, crying and begging them, stop, you know, don't do this. They just laughed.

They took his coat that his father had given to him. They killed one of the little lambs and they poured the blood of the lamb on the coat. And so they, when they got home, took the coat and showed it to their father, Jacob.

And they said, do you recognize this coat? We found it out in the wilderness. Jacob seeing the coat and the blood on it. He said, that is the coat of Joseph.

Some wild beasts must have devoured him. And he went into mourning. And for years he mourned over the death of his son, Joseph, whom he loved so dearly.

In the meantime, Joseph was sold as a slave in Egypt, but God was with him and Joseph became second in command over all of Egypt. Only the Pharaoh was over him because Joseph was able to properly interpret a dream of the Pharaoh of seven years of famine that would be followed by seven years of plenty. And so he had suggested that the Pharaoh set up barns and so forth during the seven plentiful years, they would buy all of the surplus.

And then during the lean years, they'd be able to sell the surplus to the people and survive. So he said, appoint some wise man over this. And the King said, there's none wiser than you.

You're second in command. The famine extended on up into the land of Israel. Jacob and the family were running out of grain.

There was a long drought. And so they heard that there was grain for sale in Egypt. And so the 10 of the brothers of Joseph came down to Egypt to buy grain.

Joseph recognized them. It had been about 17 years. They didn't recognize Joseph.

So Joseph began to give them a really hard time. He said, you fellows are spies. You've come down to spy out Egypt.

They said, Oh, no, no, we're not spies. We're brothers. All of us were, you know, and we have a younger brother at home.

And one of our brothers is no longer with us, but we're brothers. And he said, Oh, no, you're not brothers. You're spies.

I know you're spies. And, and he was giving him a bad time. And so he finally said, if you want to ever buy grain again, to prove you're not spies, you'll have to bring your youngest brother back with you when you come.

So they got home and they said, Dad, that magistrate down in Egypt, he is tough. He is mean. He thought we were spies.

We told him, no, we were brothers. We had a younger brother at home and another brother that wasn't with us. And he said, I don't believe that.

And if you ever want to see me again outside of prison, you better bring your younger brother back to prove your story. When you come again, Jacob said, why did you tell him you had a younger brother? He said, well, he asked us about it. And you know, how did we know he was going to say, bring him.

And Jacob said, I'll never let him go. Well, as time went on the famine continued and they were running low on grain. And so Jacob said, boys, go back down to Egypt and buy some more grain.

They said, no way we're not going to face that guy again without Benjamin, our youngest brother. And Jacob said, no, you can't take him. And they said, well, we're not going.

You don't know how tough that guy is. So finally, out of necessity, Jacob said, well, go ahead and go. And you can take Benjamin with you.

And as they left, he said, all things are against me. Wrong. You don't have all of the facts.

You don't know the full story, Jacob. You're drawing wrong conclusions because of insufficient evidence. That mean, tough guy down in Egypt is your son, Joseph, that you've been greeting over for 17 years.

He's still alive. In fact, he's one of the leaders of Egypt. And before long, you will be embracing him, kissing him, hugging him as Joseph is still alive.

You don't know that yet. And so often, not knowing all of the facts, just looking at what seems to be obvious to us, we like Jacob often cry, all things are against me. Not so.

If you only knew all of the facts, you would realize that all of these things are working together for good. If you love God and you're submitted to his purposes in your life, knowing only part of the story, we often complain. If we only knew the whole story, we would be rejoicing.

The problem in my reasoning is that I often leave God out of the equation. God, the unknown quantity. And if you factor his love, his power into the equation, the solution to the problem immediately becomes apparent.

It takes real faith to say, God, I don't understand what you are doing. I don't know why you allowed this to happen to me, but I know that you're working in my life. And please don't stop the work that you are doing.

At the end of the third chapter, we see the real triumph of faith in Habakkuk. There he said, Although the fig tree will not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines. The last verse, the labor of the olive shall fail.

The fields shall yield no grain. The flock is cut off from the fold. There's no herd in the stalls, nothing stripped bare.

Everything is gone. The grain, the animals, everything has been devoured. This was going to happen to Jerusalem when the Babylonian army would set siege against it.

They would be stripped of all of their sources of food. And he describes that pitiful condition. Fig tree, barren.

No fruit on the vines. The grapevines, barren. The olive trees, barren.

Flocks are cut off. No herd in the stalls. We're stripped.

You can't picture a situation more hopeless than this. No visible means of survival. And yet, through faith, he said, I will rejoice in the Lord and I will joy in the God of my salvation.

The word rejoice and the word joy are interesting words in the Hebrew. The word rejoice is the Hebrew word, al-laz, which literally is, I will jump up and down. The Hebrew word for joy here is gil, which in Hebrew literally is spin around.

Though we're stripped, though there is no visible means of survival, I'm going to jump up and down. I'm going to spin around in joy and rejoicing in the Lord. You say, Abba, you're crazy.

Have you ever been so happy? So filled with joy that you found yourself sort of jumping up and down and spinning around? Did you see the USC Notre Dame game? When in the last play, Bush shoved the quarterback over the goal line and USC won. Those USC fans that were there, oh, they were jumping up and down. They were spinning around.

What exultant joy. And that's the kind of joy the prophet is saying that he will have, though there is no visible means of survival. How could he? Because his faith was in the Lord.

Notice he didn't say, I will rejoice in the situation, but I will rejoice in the Lord. And he knew that God had means that he knew nothing about. That God had supplies that he knew nothing about.

And you need to know that. When you have exhausted your own reasoning and you cannot figure any way by which it might now work out. That you look beyond your limitations, your abilities, and you look to God and you rejoice in the Lord because you know that he is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that you could ask or think.

And he has ways you've never thought of. Means that you have never dreamed existed. And thus the prophet is now exercising full faith.

The just shall live by faith. He's learned that lesson and he learns to trust in God fully and completely. We can't always rejoice in our circumstances, but we can always rejoice in the Lord.

Paul the Apostle writing to the Corinthians said, sorrowing, yet always rejoicing. And there are sometimes sorrowful experiences that we go through but even in those sorrowful experiences, if we get our eyes upon the Lord, we will find cause for rejoicing. I will rejoice in the Lord.

I will joy in the God of my salvation. Today, maybe some of you are going through some hard times. Maybe you've been praying over a tough situation and it seems like God isn't hearing you.

Like Habakkuk, you see things really just desperate and it seems like the Lord is not responding. Like Habakkuk, I would encourage you, just wait and the Lord will speak to you and you'll say, look, trust me. You're not going to understand what's happening, but just trust me.

I'm in control. I'm still on the throne. I will work this out for my good and for your good because I love you.

Trust me now. Oh, may God give us that kind of faith, the faith that prevails, the faith that brings us joy joy in the midst of the tough situation because I know that God is at work in my life and in the situations that I'm facing and that I'm going to come out victorious because he wants me to have his victory. Father, we ask that today you increase our faith.

Help us, Lord, to commit our ways fully unto you. And even though we may not understand the work that you are doing, Lord, don't stop. Keep up your work in our lives.

And Lord, bring us to that place of faith that we can rejoice before we see any evidence of fulfillment. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Shall we stand? The pastors are down here at the front to minister to you today. If maybe you're in one of those situations like Habakkuk and things aren't looking good and you're worried, you're concerned because it appears like God has really forsaken you, I would encourage you to come on down and let them pray for you that God will give you that kind of faith that you can just today put your trust in him. You may have come in distressed, filled with anxieties, fears, but I pray that you'll go from here jumping up and down, spinning around, knowing that God is in control and God is going to work things out for his glory and for your good.

For all things are working together for good to those who love the Lord and are called according to his purpose. So commit your ways unto the Lord. Trust also in him and he will bring to pass his perfect will in your life.

The Lord bless thee and keep thee. The Lord make his face to shine upon thee. And be gracious unto thee and be gracious unto thee.

The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee and give thee peace.

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