

April 2011

Dear Friend,

Are you faced with deadline pressures? Kids get the flu? Your business is failing and you don't know what to do?

Don't wring your hands in despair, instead throw them up in the air! Make your bold declaration of harvest and let God take it from there! Yet, I will rejoice!

***“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 Saviour:”*** (Habakkuk 3:17-18 NIV).

I am going to share with you some things about rejoicing in difficult times. It is easy to rejoice when everything is going great. Habakkuk is painting a very bleak picture. In fact, it is pretty dark! He said there are no figs on the tree, no grapes on the vine, the olive crop has failed, and there is no food in the fields, no sheep in the pens or cattle in the stalls. That is a pretty bleak scenario, isn't it?

Perhaps you are not dealing with failed crops today, but an empty bank account. Maybe you are dealing with other areas of your life that are unfruitful, where harvest has failed to occur. God wants you to turn that situation around! You may be looking at your situation and wondering how, but God's Word shows us exactly how to do it.

First, we must realize the tests and trials of life come to every single one of us. At some time or another, difficult times are going to come. Jesus said, “...*in the world ye shall have tribulation...*” (John 16:33). However, look at the rest of that verse, after Jesus said we are going to face tribulation in this world, He said, “...***but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.***”

Habakkuk revealed a great spiritual truth! When nothing seems to be going right and things don't seem to be improving, maybe things are downright bleak, that is not the time to stop praising God or to stop being “of good cheer.” Habakkuk said, “***Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior.***” Habakkuk is saying, among other things, that despite the

circumstances of life, we are to rejoice in God. We are to delight ourselves in God and His Word and not fret over our circumstances. We are to rejoice in God's goodness, mercy and abounding grace. When circumstances change for the worse, we can still rejoice, because we are rejoicing in our unchanging God!

I want you to think for a moment how unstable we would be if we changed our attitude and demeanor every time our circumstances changed. We are living in a day of a volatile stock market, a fluctuating economy, corporate mergers and takeovers, political upheaval and constant threats of terrorism and war. Yet in the midst of it all, God does not change! **His Word does not change!** The Word says God always causes us to triumph in Christ (2 Corinthians 2:14).

It is the same Word **before** you were up for that promotion as it was **after** you didn't get the promotion! If you don't get a raise, for example, that doesn't change the immutability and infallibility of God's Holy written Word. God will take care of you whether the company you work for gives you a raise or not! God can open the door for a better situation than you ever thought possible! But, it will be on His terms. In other words, you will have to cooperate with Him and His Word so He can do it.

*"For I am the Lord, I change not..."* Malachi 3:6

*"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever."* Hebrews 13:8

*"Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my (Jesus) words shall not pass away."*  
Matthew 24:35

*"...The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord stands forever."* 1 Peter 1:24-25 NIV

The Word of God is forever settled! It is not subject to change! God's Word is His power unto salvation, or whatever it is you need, if you will believe it. (See Romans 1:16)

We looked at Habakkuk 3:18 in the New International Version. Now, let's look at it in the King James Version, *"Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."*

When trouble comes and looks as if it is there to stay, you do not have to despair or be discouraged. You do not have to fold your hands and quit. You can rejoice in the Lord, the God of your salvation. God has provided salvation for us, both spiritually and naturally. Because of Jesus, we have eternal salvation, or eternal life. We are saved spiritually from eternal death and separation from God. The salvation He has provided also includes our safety, preservation, deliverance, wholeness and soundness in the natural.

Some people want to spiritualize everything. I thank God for spiritual blessings, but I live in a natural world. We have to live and function in this world. Jesus said, *"We who are His are in this world, yet we are not of this world"* (John 17:14). We don't have to live as the world lives,

wringing our hands in despair when tests and trials arise. We have ‘inside information’ – information inside the Word of God! We can lift our hands and rejoice in the face of tests and trials. Rejoice about what? About the God of our salvation!

The reason people waiver in their emotions, depending on whether things are good or bad, is because they have nothing to stabilize their lives. Either they have not received the salvation God has provided for them, or they don’t understand their salvation. God is our salvation! He is our stabilizer! Yet, when we face tests and trials, instead of rejoicing in God and allowing Him to stabilize us, we often begin to question Him.

Some people allow those questions to cause them to fall away from God and the Church. You might see those people in church for a while, but then something happens and they drop out of sight. They turn from the very things that would keep them steady in the midst of a storm to reach the other side of that test or trial safely with songs in their hearts and testimonies on their lips.

If the prophet Habakkuk were here today, he might say to you in today ‘s language, “Look it has been a bad year. You lost your job and food has been scarce. You think you might lose everything and your future still looks uncertain. This is not the end for you! God has not changed and He wants to see you through. Rejoice in Him! Rejoice now – rejoice forever!”

When you encounter troubles, tests and trials remember this: You are just passing through! In other words, do not pitch camp on the problems. Just keep on walking, rejoicing in the God of your salvation!

Psalm 23:4 SAYS, “*Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me...*” Notice, David said he was walking **through**! Too many times we stop in the valley and get devoured! Instead, we should **pass through** the valley of tests and trials, rejoicing in our God. His Word says, “*Then shall the earth yield her increase; and God, ever our own God, shall bless us.*” (Psalm 67:6)

I am looking forward to your letter,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tom Leding".

Dr. Tom Leding