Enjoying God Forever

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[0:00] And so if you were to turn with me in your Bibles to the book of Habakkuk, and I know that's a tricky one, so everybody's like, what's that?

I assure you it is a book in the Bible, but we'll find it now, very soon. It's in the Old Testament to begin with. I'm trying to turn to my table of contents so I can help you. So it's in the Old Testament to begin with.
So it actually, well, I'm looking at the table of contents and I can't immediately spot it, but I assure you it is there. Well, that's because my table of contents runs alphabetical. That's why I'm looking at the chronological.
But anyway, it's in the Old Testament and it's closer to the end. It's in the Minor Prophets. And so I invite you to turn to chapter 3 of Habakkuk as I, like you, try and figure out exactly where this book in the Bible is.
Well, it's just before Zephaniah. That's at least what I can tell you. Well, Habakkuk chapter 3, and we'll read from verse 17 through to verse 19. However, we will continue to do what we did last time, where it will be more of a topical approach, where we'll call upon various passages of Scripture to speak to our subject.
[1:17] But we'll come to Habakkuk and chapter 3, verse 17 through to 19 will be very relevant when we do so. Habakkuk chapter 3, and we'll look at verse 17.

Hear the word of the Lord. May the Lord bless the reading of His holy and insolent.
This is the word of the Lord. Let's pray. Our Father, we thank You for Your Word opened before us now. And we do ask, O God, as we sit listening attentively, we ask, O God, that You would open our hearts, that we would receive, Lord, from Your Word.
We ask that You would open our eyes, O God, that we'll see wonderful things in Your Word, Lord. And we pray, O now, Your blessing upon the preaching of Your Word. And so, last time we considered that the Westminster Shorter Catechism, the first question, a document that we regularly engage with by quoting and confessing it in our corporate worship services, the first question says before us, this question, this defining question, what is the chief end of man?
What is the highest duty of man? I think it's a very relevant question. It is a question that should make us sit up, pay attention. It is a question that should cause us to be interested.
[3:11] It should stir curiosity because it speaks about fundamental issues. It speaks about our highest duty, our chief end.

And the answer that comes back, gleaning from all of God's Word, bringing to bear the witness of Scripture to this question, the answer that comes back is that the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.
And so, last time we looked at what it means to glorify God. This, we argued, is our destiny. This is the end to which we must order our lives.
For the believer, not only for the Christian, but for every person, for every single human being, destiny is defined by this answer. Destiny is defined by this answer.
The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. So this morning, we want to consider what it means to enjoy Him forever.
[4:16] After spending time looking at what it means to glorify God, we want to look at what does it mean to enjoy God? What does it mean to enjoy Him forever? And as we said last time, this answer is drawn from the Scriptures as a faithful summary of what man's ultimate end is.

Now, the first observation we make is that to glorify God, a phrase and an exhortation that we are so familiar with, to glorify God, is not some stoic, cold, dispassionate, unemotional, and unhappy endeavor.

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Religion, in general, is often cast in those killjoy terms. It's interesting that the Puritans, who wrote the confession that we use and believe and subscribe to, even the shorter catechism, the divines, the men called by parliament, as we discussed last week, not our parliament, but English parliament, the men called, they are known as Puritans.
And it's interesting that the Puritans are often cast as anti-joy and against pleasure. Even the legendary William Shakespeare wrote a play, The Twelfth Night, in which one of the main characters, Malvolia, is depicted as a Puritan who was a real, as some have said, wet blanket.
A person who spoils other people's fun by failing to join in with or by disapproving of their activities.
However, these caricatures become weak when held up against the historical record of who the Puritans really were.
[5:57] Especially when we realized that our confessional statements were written by them and the first question they answered in the shorter catechism was that the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him.

The Puritans were all for joy. Joy properly conceived. Joy in which the proper object is God and those things which glorify God. So to glorify God and enjoy Him, these are not at odds.
To glorify God and to enjoy Him, they are not mutually exclusive. It is imperfectly normal and necessary that in our endeavor to glorify God, that we also enjoy Him.
As pastors and as preachers, it must be insisted on that people not only seek to glorify God, but in their glorifying God, that they also enjoy Him.
Enjoy Him. Our highest end is the glory and the enjoyment of God. We talk about obeying God. We talk about following God.
[7:06] We talk about trusting God. We talk about hope in God. And these are all right and necessary. But how often do we hear in church that we must enjoy God?

We must enjoy God. In fact, not only can we enjoy God, we are commanded to enjoy God. The apostle Paul writes in Philippians 4.4, Rejoice in the Lord.
But Paul, I've got problems and I've got difficulties and I've got trials. And again I say, rejoice in the Lord. And so joy is very integral to serving the Lord.
It is very integral to being human. It is the chief end of man, human beings. It's our highest end. It's the reason God created us. It is why we were wired with a will to glorify God and with affections to enjoy Him.
If the highest end of our will is to will to glorify God, then the highest end of our affections is to enjoy God.
[8:09] The chief purpose and the use of our emotions, affections, is the enjoyment of God. God is no killjoy. Emotions are not out of place in our faith.

God made us to enjoy, and He made us to enjoy Him. The Bible uses words that convey the message of enjoying God in a variety of ways.
For example, we have the word delight. Delight, Isaiah 61 verse 10. I delight greatly in the Lord. My soul, another word, rejoices in my God.
Or the word joy and gladness, as in Psalm 100 verse 1 and 2. Make a joyful noise to the Lord all the earth. Serve the Lord with gladness.
Come into His presence with singing. Love is a word appropriately used to communicate this concept of enjoying God. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength, says the Lord Jesus in Mark 12 verse 30.
[9:13] The word desire is a word employed in the Bible to capture this idea. Whom have I in heaven but you, asked David, and there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you.

And so, how ought we to enjoy God? How can we enjoy God? Just a few thoughts as we look at this subject together. Very briefly, in three ways.
We enjoy God in His essence. We enjoy God in who He is. We enjoy God for who He is. We consider Him.
We think on Him. We meditate on Him. We look to Him. And our actions toward God must terminate in joy in God.
Our joy toward God. There are other things also that come with that worship and reverence, and all of these other appropriate responses, but included in our response when we consider God, there must be in that joy.

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[10:13] The end must be joy. The goal must be joy. And so, we enjoy God in His essence. We are called to take delight in God for who He is.

We often walk around with a very transactional approach to God. We walk around with a very legalistic approach to God. For many, it is about doing right.
It's about obeying. It's about to do so that we can please God. But few understand that we are not only created as moral creatures that obey and do what is right before God, but we've also been created as beings who must enjoy Him, find delight in Him, find pleasure in God.
God must not only be obeyed, but He must also be enjoyed. In fact, to enjoy God is obedience to God. This is why the psalmist invites us in Psalm 34 verse 8, Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good.
We are capable of tasting. We are able to see. And we are called to exercise these very endowments we receive from God on God.
[11:29] This is the highest use of man's sense of taste. It is the highest employment of man's sense of sight. It is the taste, it is to taste and to see that God is good.

Tasting the most delicious and delicate piece of finely chosen and prepared meat is not the highest end of our sense of taste. Having taste for high-end products and materially appealing apparel is not the best use of our sense of taste.
The highest use, the most appropriate sense of taste is to taste the goodness of the Lord. As you all know, one of the most beautiful scenes and parts of Cape Town would be our beloved Table Mountain.
And every day I walk out of this room here and I make it a point to look at the mountain. And it does not fail, never fails to leave me in amazement for my eyes to look and to see.
And I'm grateful at that moment that I have eyes to see this. That I have eyes to take this in. To enjoy the beauty of the mountain, the clouds and the stars and everything that God has made, whether it's in the day or, of course, at night.
[12:41] Yet as much as God intended to give me eyes to see and enjoy these precious sights, the highest, greatest, noblest use of my sight is to fix my gaze on the glory of the Lord and to enjoy Him in the splendor of His holiness.

Notice, it is God we must taste and see. And here in particular, it is the goodness of God we must taste and see. There are many good things in this world we must pursue and seek after, but few have discovered the goodness of the Lord.
When Moses, in the Old Testament, was called to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt, we read in Exodus 33, Moses said to God, when God called on him for this great task, Moses said to God, please show me your glory.
I want to see your glory. And God said, I will make all my goodness pass before you and I will proclaim before you my name, the Lord. When Moses had doubts and uncertainty, when Moses felt overwhelmed and needed reassurance, God responded by telling Moses, I will let my goodness pass before you.
Do you understand the immensity of divine goodness? The glory of divine goodness, the weight of divine goodness. When our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, walked on this earth, coming from the Father, where he could say, there's no one that is good but one.
[14:17] Moses had to hide in a cleft or a rock or he would be consumed by God's goodness. He had to be shielded or it would overtake him. God had to keep some back or it would be too much.

And we are called to taste and see that the Lord is good. We are called to find enjoyment and joy and delight in the goodness of the Lord.
Now, of course, it is not only the goodness of the Lord, but all of God. We see God's goodness as a practical representation of all that he is. So when he tells Moses, I will let my goodness pass by you, we read in Exodus 33, verse 18, or verse 19, and I will make all my goodness pass before you and I will proclaim before you my name, says God, the Lord, and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious and I will show mercy and I will show mercy.
We've been created for this huge and immense purpose of enjoying the goodness, grace, mercy of God. Imagine being blind to the beauty and wonder, the splendor and the magnificence of this world.
Being blind to the oceans, the mountains, the skyline, and every spectacular thing this world has. It's sad. Imagine being deaf to the most beautiful sounds and compositions by the most skilled

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composers and artists.
[15:44] Now imagine being blinded to the glory and the goodness of God, ignorant to the wonder and the immensity of God. As much as we've been created with a sense of wonder and amazement, we waste that sense of wonder and amazement if we do not turn it to God to behold Him in His glory and in His splendor and in His beauty.

This is the end for which we were created to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever. So we enjoy God in His essence. Second, and very quickly, we enjoy God in His work.
We enjoy God in His work. We must find enjoyment in the reality that God created the heavens and the earth. Psalm 19 tells us that the heavens and the earth, they are preaching to us.
They are proclaiming. They are declaring. Psalm 19 verse 1, They are communicating to us. If we have ears to hear, if we are engaged, and if we are interested, when we walk out of this building and we look around us, we see the mountain, we see the skies, and we see each other, there is a declaration going forth.
And the declaration that goes forth from all that God had created is this, He's glorious. He's glorious. And so we enjoy God in His work.
[17:11] When I listen to a piece of music, it's not only the music I enjoy, but the artist I enjoy as well. When I enjoy the skill of a sportsman, it's not only the skill or the act or the play I enjoy, but I take a liking to the player too.

Likewise, when I see creation, the beauty and the wonder all around us, it is not the mountain, the sea, the sky, the stars, and the splendor that my joy ends in, but it is the creator of the mountains, the creator of the ocean, the creator of you, and the creator of me.
How can we not find enjoyment in a creator that is so colorful, so masterful, so creative, and how when we look at the beauty of this world, everything it has to offer, how can we associate such beauty and majesty to a dull, stoic, grumpy, and aloof deity?
How? The signs, brothers and sisters, friends, the signs of a grumpy and miserable deity that wants His worshippers to be grumpy and miserable are just not evident in the works of His hands.
In the color of the ocean, in the glory of the highest mountains, in the splendor of the glowing stars, and in the lush green forest, we see a God in whom we can take delight, who we can enjoy, in whom we can find pleasure forevermore.
[18:46] No wonder, God speaks to the prophet Isaiah in chapter 40, verse 25, and He says, To whom then will you compare me? That I should be like Him, says the Holy One.

Lift up your eyes. Lift up your eyes. Lift up your eyes. On high, and see who created these.
Who created these. We lean in Isaiah, the Lord commands us, Be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create.
Be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create. Isaiah 65, verse 18. Not only must we enjoy God as creator, though, but we also enjoy His works of providence.
We quoted from the confession this morning, the works of God's providence. That is, simply, by providence, we mean that God's active involvement in this world whereby He moves along times and seasons and events and our very lives.
[19:55] That is to say, God is, we don't believe in the God of deism who created this world and then, you know, just left it to its own devices. No, we believe in our God who sustains this world as Hebrews chapter 1 teaches us.

He upholds the world by the word of His power. God is involved, this is what providence means, God is involved in our lives every day.
Oh, another way to put it negatively, providence is the doctrine that God is not absent. That God is not absent. And so, we enjoy God in His works every day.
We understand that He has not abandoned this world and He still sustains this world from day to day. And in knowing this, in knowing this is the day that the Lord has made, the Bible says, let us rejoice.
Let us rejoice and be glad in it. We enjoy God in His works of providence. And we also then find joy in the greatness of all of God's works.
[21:01] That's the work of our salvation. David was adamant that the Lord not take away the joy of thy salvation. the joy of thy salvation.

He prayed that the Lord would restore to him the joy of thy salvation. Psalm 51. When we are called to enjoy God forever, it is because He has saved us and it's because we are His.

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We cannot enjoy God apart from the work of salvation. Psalm 13, verse 5. But I have trusted in your steadfast love. My heart shall rejoice in your salvation.
This is why the very birth of the Savior, Lord Jesus Christ, was greeted with immense joy by those who understood it brought salvation. His mother Mary responded in a magnificat where she says, My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.
The truth that God is our Savior must be met firstly with great joy. Great joy. Joy in God who has saved us.
[22:20] Dear brothers and sisters, does your spirit rejoice in God your Savior? Do you take the light in what He has done for your soul? Do you enjoy His grace?

that He has bought you, redeemed you, that He has set you, that He has set you free, delivered you, secured you, blessed you, raised you up with Christ?
Enjoy the God of your salvation. We are too prone to enjoy lesser things. We have become skilled in finding delight in inferior things.
We have trained our fallen faculties to rejoice in small. things. The Lord Jesus Christ knew this. And so Jesus rebukes the disciples who came to Him and they bragged.
They had this gloat, they had this excitement, they were giddy about something that happened. And they came to Him and they were excited that even the demons were subject to them.
[23:23] they were happy about this. Lord, Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name. And Jesus responds to this in Luke 10 verse 20, nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.

Rejoice that your names are written in heaven. finding your name written down in good and desirous contexts and places brings always a joyful feeling and a feeling of affirmation.
You know, when you attend a conference and there you see, well, they expected you, your name is there, you got your card, your name is written. When you, oh, this is a good one, I think there was a lot of controversy at the beginning of this year, your matric exams come out, right?
Your name goes into the paper and you, in my case at least, you know, running and not sure, having no assurance or confidence, seeing your name there, wow, wow.
The disciples have done great things. They've caused the demons to be subject to the name of Jesus. Jesus says, do not rejoice in that. Rejoice that your names are written in heaven. So Paul says in Romans 5, 11, more than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ.
[24:53] We also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ through whom we have now received reconciliation. We've been brought near to God.

Christ had now come and made peace where there was enmity and when we were at war with God and when we were in rebellion against God, God took the initiative and sent His Son to make peace and to bring us to Him, to restore us unto Him and that's what we understand in the doctrine of reconciliation.
We've been reconciled, rejoicing this. And then, I think this is finally, we enjoy God in His Word. We enjoy God in His Word.
We enjoy God in His essence, we enjoy God in His works of creation, providence, and salvation. And then lastly, we enjoy God in His Word. The Scriptures must bring us joy. Psalm 19, verse 8, The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart.
The commandments of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. More to be desired are they, namely the Word of God, more to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold.
[26:09] Psalm 119, verse 103, How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth. Oh, that the reading of God's Word, the reading of Scripture not become an obligatory exercise we fulfill because our conscience is putting so much pressure on us that if we can't do this, then we will, you know, not be able to do anything else and we walk around with a sense of guilt.

Oh, that the reading of God's Word won't be cast in such negative terms, but that the reading of God's Word will be seen as a joy. More to be desired are they. What is precious in your life? What is valuable to you? You can answer that question and then David says, more to be desired are they. More to be desired are the Scriptures.
It's God's Word. We read the prophets receiving God's Word and it was sweet to them, for instance, Ezekiel 3, verse 3. And he said to me, son of man, feed your belly with the scroll that I give you and fill your stomach with it.

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Interesting word picture there and, you know, analogy that's happening there and feed your stomach with the scroll. But then I ate it, says Ezekiel, and it was in my mouth as sweet as honey. [27:31] As sweet as honey. The Scriptures are given for our enjoyment. One Bible teacher writes and he says, the Bible is not an end in itself but a means to bring men and women to an intimate and satisfying knowledge of God.

That they may enter into Him, that they may delight in His presence, may taste and know the inner sweetness of the very God Himself in the core and in the center of their hearts.
So when we are called to enjoy God forever, we enjoy Him in His goodness, we enjoy Him in His wondrous works and we enjoy Him in His life-giving word.
As we conclude, we have to marry the realities of trials and struggles, hardships and difficulty, even for the Christian.
We have to marry the reality of those negative experiences with this call to enjoy God forever.
When we speak of enjoying God, it is not in the absence of difficulty.
[28:39] This is nowhere better demonstrated than the ending of the book of Habakkuk. The book of Habakkuk deals with Israel's sin and God's judgment but the twist in the book, or at least the twist for Habakkuk, is Habakkuk expressing confusion that God would judge Israel for her sin through a nation that is sinning more and was off and Habakkuk didn't understand this.

You're judging us for our sins by those gross sinners or through those gross sinners. God's response is simple. I will judge both nations for their wickedness.
Habakkuk responds with trust, hope, and joy. Even when we do not understand how God works and even when His plans go over our heads and even when we make no sense out of what's happening.
It is then and especially then that we must delight ourselves in Him. This is so because though we do not know all His works, we do know He's merciful.
We do know that He's gracious. Though we do not know all His plans, we do know that He's slow to anger and abounding in loving kindness. In the words of that great Baptist preacher Charles Spurgeon, when we cannot trace His hand, we must trust His heart.
[30:03] And so we read in Habakkuk chapter 3 verse 17. By the way, that was all introduction. Here we go. Verse 17. Though the victory should not blossom, nor the fruit be on the vines, the produce of the other fail and the fields yield no fruit.

Though the flock be cut to from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls. In other words, Habakkuk is describing a reality in which the Babylonians will come and they will completely destroy everything.
They will completely destroy livelihoods, the agrarian society on which the economy is based and built. The city will be, the nation will be flattened, as it were.
Though the fig tree should not blossom, though the, though the, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food. Though the flock be cut to from the fold and there be no herd in the stall.
When we are at our lowest of our low, in other words, even though there is nothing. If I were to write the contemporary translation or message Bible, even though there is nothing.
[31:14] Habakkuk says, yet I will rejoice in the Lord. I will take joy in the God of my salvation. Here we see, in times of difficulty, in times of lack, in times of trouble, in times of uncertainty, we can be resolved to enjoy God forever.

But if you just indulge me one moment, reconciling the trials we endure for God and enjoying God is not where the story ends.
As much as we can enjoy God and endure loss and endure trials, one day the suffering will end. One day the injustice will end.
One day the trouble will end. One day sin will end. But our enjoyment of God will continue.
It will go on from strength to strength. It will be joy unmixed, immeasurable and eternal. Despite all that we endure in this world, this world will one day be rolled up and it will give way and we will enter glory where we will enjoy God forever.
[32:38] This is why tucked in to Psalm 16 at the end I should say of Psalm 16. David says this, You have made known to me the path of life. In your presence there is fullness of joy.

At your right hand are pleasures forevermore. Now, in your presence can be now but one day the proximity will be closer. One day there will not be a divide.

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one day we will dwell with God and as the book of Revelation teaches, God will dwell with us. And David says in your presence is fullness of joy.
You may be here this morning and you may be wondering how do I enjoy God? How can I enjoy God? How can I find joy in God? How you say can this be true for me?
The answer is Jesus. Jesus, I answer. Jesus makes it possible. The Bible says that Jesus who for the joy set before him endured the cross.
[33:45] The cross in itself wasn't joyful. It was the instrument of punishment for sin. Jesus wasn't looking forward to the cross in a sense which is why he prayed that night let us come past from me.

So why does the Bible say for the joy Hebrews chapter 12 for the joy set before him he endured the cross. The joy that was set before him was not exactly the cross.
It was the pleasure of the Father. The glory of God. It was the salvation of us sinners to bring us into fellowship with his Father and to make it possible for us to glorify God and to enjoy him forever in and through and because of Jesus we can.
Would you come to him? Would you trust in him? Would you rest in him? Let's pray. Our Father we thank you for how you have created us and designed us.
We thank you Lord that you have given us through your word the answer to the question what are we here for? What is our destiny?
[35:08] What is our highest end and our chief duty? It is to glorify you and to enjoy you. It is we've been created in such a way given the endowments for this end.

It is a perfect fit Lord that we can glorify you and enjoy you and so I pray that you would help us in this Lord. And I do ask oh Lord for those who may be here and are desirous of setting you as the end your glory and your enjoyment.
I pray Lord that you do for them what you've done for us Lord. That you open up their hearts give them faith oh Lord. Help them to set their lives on you. We ask and we pray with these mercies in Jesus name.
Amen.

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