

May 24th, 2020

How the Christian Faces the Loss of All Things

Habakkuk 3:17-19

This morning we finish the book of Habakkuk. What's is so unique about this passage is that it is here how we see that the Christian is entirely different from every other human being on earth. Who is the Christian? That is the central theme of Habakkuk's prophecy. **Habakkuk 2:4** "...the righteous shall live by his faith." And now we see how this is fulfilled in the resolution of the book.

The Big Idea...

The Christian can face the loss of all things *with rejoicing* because the LORD is his by invincible covenant

- ☆The Ruin of Covenant Curses
- ☆The Rejoicing of a Covenant People
- ☆The Resources of Our Covenant God

I. The Ruin of Covenant Curses

The loss of all pleasure

Please look with me at v.17 "Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls..." Consider how Habakkuk moves from luxurious things to essential things. **First**, he deals

with luxurious things—the fig tree, the vine, and the olive tree. In **Judges 9:8-13**, we read a very interesting parable containing these three things: “The trees once went out to anoint a king over them, and they said to **the olive tree**, ‘Reign over us.’ But the olive tree said to them, ‘Shall I leave *my abundance*, by which gods and men are *honored*, and go hold sway over the trees?’ And the trees said to **the fig tree**, ‘You come and reign over us.’ But the fig tree said to them, ‘Shall I leave *my sweetness and my good fruit* and go hold sway over the trees?’ And the trees said to **the vine**, ‘You come and reign over us.’ But the vine said to them, ‘Shall I leave *my wine that cheers God and men* and go hold sway over the trees?’ What does this parable tell us? These things represented all the pleasures of life. Wine, fig cakes, anointing oil. These things were used to honor and cheer both God and men. Habakkuk is eyeing the loss of all these things. All pleasures in this life—gone.

The loss of all necessities

But consider the last three things—the fields, the flock, and the herd. These things weren’t *mere* pleasures, they were the very necessities of life. The loss of things things meant: no medicine; no bread; no meat or milk; no clothing; no means to barter, trade or purchase; no building materials; no vegetables; *no livelihood*. In short, everything needed to survive is gone. Nothing could be more dark than this imagery that Habakkuk is giving us. That’s why in the previous verse he said in four different ways how scared he was. Look at **v.16** “I hear, and my body trembles; my lips quiver at the sound; rottenness enters into my bones; my legs tremble beneath me.” To my knowledge none of us has every experienced *anything* like this. We live in a world of safety nets. If you have an emergency, you can go to the hospital *even if* you don’t have means to pay. Our government gives out stimulus checks. We have a welfare system and food stamps and unemployment benefits. There’s none of that here. Everything you need to survive is gone.

The nightmare of dystopia

Habakkuk is describing a dystopian world, only it's not fiction. It is like Hunger Games, 1984 and a Brave New World all rolled up into one nightmarish reality. The city of Jerusalem was going to be laid to waste. The cities of Judea, and all her glorious buildings, were going to be leveled to the ground or inhabited by strangers.

The curse of the covenant

Habakkuk is describing the curses of the covenant. This is precisely what God told them would happen. **Deuteronomy 28:15-19** "...if you will not obey the voice of the Lord your God or be careful to do all his commandments and his statutes that I command you today, then all these *curse*s shall come upon you and overtake you. *Cursed* shall you be in the city, and *cursed* shall you be in the field. *Cursed* shall be your basket and your kneading bowl. *Cursed* shall be the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground, the increase of your herds and the young of your flock. *Cursed* shall you be when you come in, and *cursed* shall you be when you go out."

Maxim #1: God is not a deist

So we come to our **first maxim** — our first absolute: calamities are not the *result* of naturalistic processes *but* of a Holy God judging sin. We can too easily fall prey to the heresy of Deism. Deism is in our American bloodstream. Many of our founding fathers were Deists. Deism acknowledges that there is a God who created all things, but he doesn't interfere, or intervene, or govern or sustain the world that he created. He simply wound up the watch of the universe, and now it is running on it's own. In that kind of universe, we can look at the calamities around us, and totally disconnect them from God. We can blame everything on secondary causes. The virus is the result of a Chinese laboratory. The lock-downs are the result of bad politics. The higher death rate is the result of underlying health conditions. Of course secondary causation is a real thing. But let's not miss the forest for the trees. God is the one who

brings calamities on planet earth. In fact, He has brought every single calamity. **Amos 3:6** asks “Does disaster come to a city, unless the Lord has done it?” This failure of the fig tree that Habakkuk mentions, is not *ultimately* attributable to the Babylonians. Yes it’s true that they will ravage the land and leave it desolate. Yes it’s true that “consequent disruption...of the family and other social orders shall eventuate in an unproductive land.”¹ But Babylon is simply a tool. God already told **Habakkuk in 1:5-6** “I am doing a work in your days that you would not believe if told. For behold, I am raising up the Chaldeans.” In other words, all of this calamity that we see in **v.17** was *ultimately* from the LORD.

Maxim #2: No people have ever survived breaking covenant with God

That brings us to our second maxim: No country has ever survived breaking covenant with God. Look at history. What nation has ever survived that has rebelled against the LORD? Go and read the latter chapters of Jeremiah. See all the prophecies against Egypt and the Philistines, and Moab, Ammon, and Babylon. All of them broke covenant with the God of Heaven, and they reaped a whirlwind of destruction. They didn’t fall, simply because one nation was stronger than they. No, they fell because God judged them for breaking the covenant. Perhaps you say to yourself: “those nations weren’t in covenant with God, they were decidedly pagan, or decidedly for other gods.” I would answer: yes it’s true that those nations were decidedly pagan, and decidedly for other gods, but that does not change the fact they were in covenant with God. Listen to how God declares that the whole world has broken covenant with Him. He says in **Isaiah 24:5-6** “The earth lies defiled under its inhabitants; for they have transgressed the laws, violated the statutes, *broken the everlasting covenant*. Therefore a curse devours the earth, and its inhabitants suffer for their guilt.” Dear congregation, that’s what sin is. It is a betrayal of mankind’s covenant obligation to love the LORD God with mind, heart and

¹ O. Palmer Robertson, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Books of Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah*, (Grand Rapids, MI.,: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), pg. 245

strength. That is the explanation for why the world is the way it is today. Mankind has broken covenant with God Almighty. As one author has said

“We live and move and have our being in him. This is true whether we are covenant keepers (in Christ) or covenant breakers (in Adam). In either case, we are covenant creatures with God...All people are covenantally bound to... God.”²

Experimental Ruin

And this is the explanation of all history. Just consider the world today. Why do we see calamity? Why do we see mankind given over to a reprobate mind? Why do we see plague and pestilence? Because God is judging the world for breaking covenant with Him.³ This is God’s world. “It is He who made us, and we are his.”⁴ If you here this morning and you are still in rebellion against this covenant God, what do you think is going to happen to you? If Judah didn’t escape breaking God’s covenant, if the Babylonians didn’t, do you think you will? Are you prepared to suffer not only the loss of all pleasurable things, but the loss of your very soul? Do you know that Jesus said “...the one who has not [right relationship with God] *even what he has will be taken away*” (**Matthew 13:12**)? There is no greater ruin than be under the curse of God’s covenant. That’s our first point.

² K. Scott Oliphint, *Covenantal Apologetics: Principles & Practice in Defense of Our Faith*, (Wheaton, IL.: Crossway, 2013), pg. 97-98

³ That’s at the bottom of Paul’s argument in **Romans 1:18** when he says “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven...” Why is God angry? Because mankind has an obligation to honor and love God, and they have ignored that obligation.

⁴ Psalm 100:3

II. The Rejoicing of a Covenant People

The chiastic structure

Here's where we see the stunning twist in our passage. Let's read **v.17-18** together. "*Though* the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls...

yet I will *rejoice* in the Lord; I will *take joy* in the God of my salvation."

There is a chiastic structure to this text. A chiastic structure is when the main point of the text is in the middle. It's like a pyramid on it's side. There are one set of truths that ascend to the main point, and then the mirrored set of truths that descend from the main point. The reason why chiastic structure is so helpful is because it identifies the main point. So let's consider it together.

A - Curse (v.17)

B - No strength in the land (v.17)

X - I will rejoice in the LORD (v.18)

~B - God is my strength (v.19)

~A - Blessing (v.19)

Jumping and spinning for joy

Rejoicing in the LORD, taking joy in God, is the main point. And these two verbs in **v.18** are very similar. To *rejoice* means to exult, to triumph. Literally it is jumping for joy. The second verb *take joy* means to be glad or to rejoice. Literally it is to spin around with violent affection. I think the one image that really captures both of these verbs is when David was bringing the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem. **2 Samuel 6:14** says that "David danced before the LORD with all his might." He was literally jumping for joy. He was spinning around with violent affection. Michal, his wife, "looked out her window and saw

King David leaping and dancing before the LORD” (2 Samuel 6:16). That’s the force of these verbs here.

Habakkuk’s strange response

Now doesn’t that strike you as strange that Habakkuk would use such imagery *here*? He just spoke of the awful covenant curses that are coming. How would you sustain yourself under such a threat? Habakkuk didn’t just resign himself. He didn’t tell himself ‘oh well, there’s nothing we can do about it.’ He wasn’t applying the principle of psychological detachment.⁵ He wasn’t delving into escapism. That’s how many of us are tempted to deal with the present crisis. ‘Let’s just turn off the news, don’t think about it anymore. Drink some more. Watch another movie.’ That’s not what Habakkuk did. Nor did he simply put his brave face on. He didn’t grit his teeth and say “I am not going to whimper or cry, I am going to be a man.”⁶ These are not helpful ways to face the loss of all things. All of them will fail you. There is not enough drink, not enough entertainment, not enough bravery that will shield you on the day of trouble. **The only way to face the loss of all things is with joy.** And he shows us that this is not something we have to conjure up, it is something every Christian already possesses. Consider five aspects of joy that every Christian has.

1. Christians have a contrary joy

Meaning, Christians have joy in the face of contrary or injurious circumstances. Notice the language. Habakkuk says in v.17 “*Though* the fig tree should not blossom...” etc., v.18 “*yet* I will rejoice in the LORD.” The word *yet* connects two contrary thoughts together that shouldn’t go together. Paul uses the word *yet* similarly in 2 Corinthians 6:10. He says we are “...sorrowful, *yet* always rejoicing.” Only Christians have this type of contrary joy. When Peter and the apostles were beaten and their lives threatened by the high priest

⁵ Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *From Fear to Faith: Rejoicing in the Lord in Turbulent Times*, (Nottingham, England,: IVP, 1997), pg. 68

⁶ *ibid*

they had a contrary joy. **Acts 5:41** says "...they left the presence of the council, *rejoicing* that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name." The woman of God in Proverbs 31 had a contrary joy. **v.25** says she "...laughs at the time to come." Literally it's rendered "she laughs at the latter day," meaning, she is so confident in what will take place in the future that she can't help but giggle with joy. Beloved you already have this contrary joy. A Christian can never fail to possess it, because it is the fruit of the Holy Spirit who dwells within you. **Galatians 5:22** "...the fruit of the Spirit is love, [and] *joy*..." God put joy in you, and no one can remove it. You could perish a hundred times, but the joy in knowing that God is your Father; the Son is Your Redeemer, and the Spirit is Your Comforter can never perish. And I've seen it in so many of you. I've sat with some of you, in the midst of great suffering, of weeping, of loneliness, of loss, of despair, and *yet* there is still this contrary joy that is there. It might be small, it might be imperceptible at times. It might be the size of a mustard seed, but it's *still* there. We may be sorrowful, but *inwardly* the Spirit is supplying us with joy. That's the **first aspect** of a Christian's joy, a Christian has a contrary joy.

2. Christians have an independent joy

This is an amplification of the last. Not only does a Christian possess a joy contrary to his circumstances, but his joy is entirely *independent* of his circumstances. This is what makes the Christian different from the rest of humanity. All of humanity is dependent upon the things of this world for their joy. Jesus said that it is the Gentiles—that is, the outsiders—who are always anxiously asking "'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'" (**Matthew 6:31**) Do you realize what a different position you are in? Their joy depends on the stock market. Their joy depends on a vaccine being found. Their joy depends on the economy not crashing. Their joy depends on who is in the White House. A Christian's joy is complete independent of anything in this world. **v.17** makes this clear. Habakkuk is left with nothing on this earth that could bring him joy. There is no good left in his life, and *yet*

Habakkuk is rejoicing.⁷ The Christian’s joy is independent of anything in this world. That’s the **second aspect** of our joy: it’s independent. Now let’s see *why*.

3. Christians have a covenantal joy

Meaning, our joy is grounded in the covenant LORD. Please look again at **v.18** “...yet I will rejoice in *the LORD*...” Notice the CAPS. This is the most special name of God in the OT—Yahweh or Jehovah. Where did this name originate? Please turn with me to **Exodus 3:14-15**. I know we spoke of this covenantal name of God at the beginning of our series and during Psalm 46, but most of us did not grow up in churches that taught on the God of the covenant. Now this is the incident where Moses asked God His name so he could tell the children of Israel if they asked. **Exodus 3:14-15** God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” [*“LORD”*—connecting to Habbakuk]⁸ And he said, “Say this to the people of Israel: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” God also said to Moses, “Say this to the people of Israel: ‘The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.’ This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.” Now note two things here. **First**, this name for God—the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—is used throughout the Bible. Even in the NT. Jesus used this title in **Mark 12:26**⁹; as well as Peter (**Acts 3:13**) and Stephen (**Acts 7:32**). It is not *merely* a name for God for the Jews. If you are a Gentile believer, your God is still the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. That’s why the end of **v.15** says “This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all

⁷ The Psalmist says in **Psalm 4:7** “You have put more joy in my heart than they have when their grain and wine abound.”

⁸ In the New Testament, Lord (Yahweh) is applied to Jesus (**Rom. 10:13**, citing **Joel 2:32**).

⁹ also cf. **Matthew 22:32**; **Luke 20:37**

generations.”¹⁰ **Secondly**, the reason *why* this is significant is because when God called Himself this, His one object was to persuade us that the covenant of grace¹¹ that He established can never be broken. God does not want us to think of Him *apart* from the covenant He made with *our father Abraham*.¹² What is the heart of the covenant promise? **Jeremiah 31:33** “This is the covenant that I will make...I will be their God and they shall be my people.” When the Bible uses the word “LORD” in caps like Habakkuk does, it's always reminding us of *this* covenant promise. You see beloved, God calls himself the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob *because they are still bound to Him*. He is not the God of the dead but the God of the *living*.¹³ He is *still* their God and they are *still* His people.

Alright then, why does Habakkuk rejoice in this? Back to our text. Habakkuk says “...yet I will rejoice in *the LORD*...” He’s essentially saying ‘I will rejoice in *the God of the covenant*.’ That’s how you *must* understand the word “LORD” —*as the God of the covenant*. So then, why does the Christian rejoice in the God of the covenant?¹⁴ Because just He “...has never failed His covenant, so

¹⁰ Calvin says here “There may be an apparent incongruity in saying, “this is my memorial unto all generations,” because a much more excellent memorial succeeded in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ; but my reply is, that since, in the coming of Christ, the truth of the covenant made with Abraham was shewn forth, and was thus demonstrated to be firm and infallible, its memory was rather renewed than destroyed; and that thus it still survives and flourishes in the Gospel, since Abraham even now ceases not to be the father of the faithful, under the one Head.”

¹¹ cf. Westminster Confession of Faith Chapter 7

¹² cf. Galatians 3:29

¹³ Mark 12:27

¹⁴ Our entire Christian experience is only experienced covenantally. Faith in Jesus Christ is the embracing of the covenant.

The church is the community of the covenant.

The whole Bible is the book of the covenant.

The preached Word, pastoral care, corporate worship, the administration of the sacraments are all signs, tokens, expressions, and instruments of the covenant.

The hope of glory or eternal life is the goal of the covenant.

The sweet communion between our Heavenly Father and us as adopted sons; between Christ our Bridegroom and we His bride; between the Spirit and His dwelling place is the prize of the covenant.

—This is a paraphrase of J.I. Packer in Herman Witsius’ *The Economy of the Covenants Between God and Man Vol. 1*, (Grand Rapids, MI.,: Reformation Heritage Books, Reprint 2010), pg. 31

also He never will.”¹⁵ Dear loved one, it doesn't matter what is happening in the world today. You have been betrothed to the LORD by covenant. **Hosea 2:19** “I will betroth you to me forever. I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy.” You are betrothed to the LORD *forever*. This means that it doesn't matter *in the least* what happens to you in this life. You are the LORD's. Who can break that covenant? Can persecution, famine, or danger break this covenant? “No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us” (**Romans 8:37**) Can martyrdom break that covenant? No. **Luke 21:16-18** “...some of you they will put to death...but not a hair on your head will perish.” Can Satan and the hordes of hell break that covenant? No. **John 10:28** “I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.” Beloved not even you can break this covenant. **2 Timothy 2:13** “...if we are faithless, he remains faithful—for he cannot deny himself.” You can look at the future and laugh with joy. You can leap and spin with violent affection, because you are in the hands of the LORD, the God of the covenant.¹⁶ That's the **third aspect** of our joy. Now let's see why this covenant cannot be broken.

4. Christians have a joy that is guarded by Christ

Look at the second part of v.18 “I will take joy in the God of my salvation.” What salvation is Habakkuk talking about? He can't be talking about salvation from trouble—v.17 makes that clear. He can't be talking about national salvation—of Judah being delivered from Babylon. God has already made it clear that Babylon is coming and nothing is going to stop that. No Habakkuk is talking about Jesus Christ *Himself*—the God of *my salvation*. This is *why* the covenant is invincible. **Because God *never* deals with us except**

¹⁵ Petrus Van Mastricht, *Theoretical-Practical Theology: Faith in the Triune God Vol. 2*, (Grand Rapids, MI., Reformation Heritage Books, 2019), pg. 96

¹⁶ "This joy hath none of the fears that other joys have to make us doubt the losing of it; it hath none of the impediments to stop the way to it that other joys have. It hath none of the sorrows that other joys have to [commingle] with it. It hath none of the miseries that conclude all other joys to determine it." Edward Marbury 238, Source: <https://archive.org/stream/commentaryorexpo00marb#page/n111/mode/2up>

through Christ.¹⁷ Think about that for a moment. God never deals with you apart from Christ.¹⁸ “There is no gift that has not been earned by Him.”¹⁹ Dear congregation, why does God treat you as righteous? Is it because you are *actually* righteous? No. God treats you as righteous, *precisely* because Christ earned your righteousness. Paul said “not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith” (**Phil. 3:9**). You possess nothing that wasn't earned by Christ. But conversely, there is no curse that you deserve that has not been born by Him. **Galatians 3:13** “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree.” Dear believer, why won't God damn you? Because He already damned His Son who stood in your stead. Don't you see? **God never deals with you apart from Christ.** This is why Habakkuk could have exceeding joy in the midst of danger. Though Judah was going to suffer the curse of the covenant, he would never taste *the ultimate curse*. He could say with the Apostle Paul “I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.”²⁰ (**2 Tim. 1:12**). Christ is guarding you dear believer—the God-man Himself. That's the **fourth aspect** of our joy: we have a joy that is guarded by Christ Himself.

5. Christians have a joy in God Himself

Notice carefully in **v.18** the proper object of Habakkuk's joy, “...yet I will rejoice *in the LORD...in the God* of my salvation.” His heart is captivated *not mainly* but what God *does*, but by who God *is*. Not mainly by the gift, by but the Giver Himself. This is the main difference between the idolatry and true worship. The idolatrous man ‘worships’ in order to gain another end—he

¹⁷ This is a paraphrase of Geerhardus Vos in Witsius' *Economy of the Covenants*, pg.36

¹⁸ Q. 31. With whom was the covenant of grace made? A. The covenant of grace was made with Christ as the second Adam, and in him with all the elect as his seed.

¹⁹ *ibid*

²⁰ KJV

doesn't seek intimacy and friendship with God. The Mormon worships 'god' in order to *gain* his own planet. The Muslim worships 'god' in hopes to *gain* 70 virgins. The nominal Christian 'worships' God perhaps to *gain* a reputation as a good person. But the true child of God is content with the loss of all things so long as He has God Himself. **Philippians 3:8** "I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, *in order that I may gain Christ...*" Habakkuk can rejoice. Not mainly because he himself had eternal life. But because he had eternal life *with God*. Christianity is nothing, if it doesn't have this. Augustine in reading the words from **Exodus 33:21** "you cannot see my face...and live" prayed "Then, Lord, let me die, that I may see thy face."²¹ When the early church father Basil faced a death threat by Modestus—Caesar's lieutenant—he replied "If that be all, I fear not; yea, your master cannot more pleasure me than in sending me unto my heavenly Father, to whom I now live, and to whom I desire to hasten."²² "A Dutch martyr felling the flame come to his beard, said "Ah, what a small pain is this, to be compared to the glory to come!"²³ You see Habakkuk surveyed the worst that could happen to him. Death. But that meant to depart and be Christ. **Philippians 1:23** "My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better." To die is *gain* for the Christian. "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (**Philippians 1:21**). Why is death gain? Because in death, you gain a clear, full, constant, eternal and sinless fellowship God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. That's why the Psalmist can say "As for me, I shall behold your face in righteousness; when I awake, I shall be satisfied..." (**Psalms 17:15**). Loved ones, regardless of how each of us face our death, this is invincibly true—when your eyes close for the last time, when you open them again you will be in the presence of Your Savior. All your thirsting for Him, your panting after Him, your longing for Him will be satisfied. The Bridegroom will open up that eternal door and welcome you into the

²¹ cited in Thomas Brooks, *The Works of Thomas Brooks Vol. 2*, (Carlisle, PA.,: The Banner of Truth Trust, Reprint 2001), pg. 73

²² *ibid*

²³ *ibid*

marriage feast. And there you will always be with the Lord. That's the **fifth aspect** of our joy: the Christian's highest joy is God Himself.

Now these five joys, a contrary joy; and independent joy; a covenantal joy; a joy guarded by Christ; and a joy in God Himself is why Habakkuk could face the future and leap and spin and laugh. That's our **second point**, the rejoicing of a covenant people.

III. The Resources of Our Covenant God

v.18 was the pinnacle of that chiasmic structure and so now we are walking back down that sideways pyramid. We need to see the mirrored truths of **v.17**. Yes we have God *Himself* in **v.18**, but God adds grace to grace and gives His people three important things to survive when the fig tree doesn't blossom.

1. God gives His people strength

Look at the beginning of **v.19** "GOD, the Lord, is my strength..." Now this word can mean power or might. Samson had this type of physical strength. He tore apart a lion, and was able to kill a thousand Philistines with the jawbone of a donkey. But it's clear that Habakkuk doesn't mean that type of strength here. By saying "GOD, the Lord, is my strength," he's saying God you are my sufficiency. We know that for two reasons. 1) All of us will lose our physical strength one day if we haven't already. But God is still the strength—that sufficiency—of the believer even then. 2) This is the mirrored truth of **v.17**. Meaning **v.17** and **v.19** are contrasts. In other words, "Though the fig tree should not blossom"—though these other things fail to give me strength, fail to give me what I need, God gives me everything I need, He is my strength, He is my sufficiency. Sufficient simply means enough. Isn't it apparent from what

we've already seen that God is enough dear believer. Listen to how the Puritan Thomas Brooks puts it:

“O sirs! hath God given you his Son, his Spirit, his grace, his glory, yea, himself, and will he deny you lesser things?²⁴ Hath he given you those things that are more worth than ten thousand worlds, and will he not give you bread to eat, and raiment to put on? Hath he given you those spiritual riches that infinitely exceed and excel all the riches, rubies and pearls in the world; and will he deny you a little money in your purses to bear your charges till you come to heaven? Hath he given you a crown, and will he deny you a crust? Hath he given you his royal robes, and will he deny you a few rags? Hath he give you a royal palace, and will he deny you a poor cottage to shelter you from the stormy winter and from the scorching summer?”²⁵

Brooks is point is *not* that we will never suffer loss. But He's arguing from the greater to the lesser like Paul in **Romans 8:32** “He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?” That's his point: since God already met our greatest need by giving us Christ, then certainly He is sufficient to meet all our needs in our greatest danger. And if He decides for us to go to suffer then He will provide everything we need in that moment for our good and His glory.

2. God gives His people success

Halfway through v.19 “...he makes my feet like the deer's; he makes me tread on my high places.” Deer and bighorn sheep have an amazing ability to ascend the rocky mountains over dangerous terrain, leaping, bounding, with little to put their feet on. They reach these peaks, and you are just are dumbfounded to how they accomplished such feats. So it is with the child of

²⁴ Romans 8:32 “He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?”

²⁵ Brooks, pg. 61-62

God. You are faced with danger on every side, the journey looks impossible at times. How many times the heart of the Christians say “Lord I can’t go on anymore?” How many times will I fall into sin? How many times will I face tragedy? How many more demons will molest and tempt me? How will I ever get to the peaks of heaven? Habakkuk answers ‘HE will make me tread on my high places.’²⁶ Meaning, no matter what hindrances or heartaches you face, success is guaranteed. “And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good.” (**Romans 8:28**). How hard can we press this truth? Will God make you tread on high places if your child dies? Can God work all things together for good if your wife dies? George Muller thought so. During the 19th century, in addition to the 10,000 sermons that he preached, Muller opened up several orphanages without ever asking for a single dime. But he still faced tragedy. When Mary was struck with rheumatic fever, Müller’s heart was close to broken. But he trusted the words of **Psalm 84:11** that said “For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord bestows favor and honor. *No good thing does he withhold* from those who walk uprightly.” This is what he prayed

*“If it is really good for me, my darling wife will be raised up again; sick as she is. God will restore here again. But if she is not restored again, then it would not be a good thing for me. And so my heart was at rest.”*²⁷

How could he be at rest? Because he knew that either way, ultimately, God would make him tread on high places, God would work this for good. Dear congregation, whatever hardship you are personally facing right now, even if it’s due to your own sin, God will grant you success *ultimately*. It may look like all is lost. It may look you have an incurable problem. But God will may your feet

²⁶ The verbs here are important to note. When he says “he makes” it is in the imperfect verb, meaning it expresses an action that is not yet complete. I think the KJV renders it better by saying “he *will make* my feet.” This is important because when Habakkuk said this, he saw the danger coming. He was speaking about the future.

²⁷ John Piper, *A Camaraderie of Confidence: The Fruit of Unfailing Faith in the Lives of Charles Spurgeon, George Müller, and Hudson Taylor*, (Wheaton, IL.: Crossway, 2016), pg. 68

like the deer. He will make you leap and bound. He will grant you success. That's the **second resource** that our covenant God promises: success.

3. God gives His people song

Let's look at the last part of v.19 "To the choirmaster: with stringed instruments." This maybe the easiest part to skim over, but oh it's packed with treasure. This phrase "To the choirmaster" seems straightforward enough, but it's actually a really obscure Hebrew word. The LXX which is the Greek translation of the OT interprets it completely differently. Normally it translates this word "unto the end" meaning this song is to be sung until the end. But here the LXX translates it as "that I may conquer in his song."²⁸ I think that captures the spirit of what Habakkuk is saying here. These precious truths are not meant to be *merely* read, or meditated on, or believed. They are meant to be sung. God has supplied us with songs. Thy hymns of the church are war songs. God has given us song to remind us of our final victory. Just think of the songs of Scripture. When the children of Israel were delivered through the Red Sea, Moses and the children of Israel sang (**Exodus 15**). When Deborah and Barak defeated the Canaanites, they sang to the LORD (**Judges 5**). When Paul and Silas were in prison they sang hymns to God (**Acts 16:25**). It's no surprise that when the great apologist Ravi Zacharias died this past week, His family who loves the LORD lamented their patriarch's passing with a song from the Puritan Richard Baxter.

"Lord, it belongs not to my care
 Whether I die or live;
 To love and serve Thee is my share,
 And this Thy grace must give.
 If life be long, I will be glad,
 That I may long obey;
 If short, yet why should I be sad

²⁸ Robertson, pg. 248

To welcome endless day?

Then I shall end my sad complaints
 And weary sinful days,
 And join with the triumphant saints
 That sing my Savior's praise.
 My knowledge of that life is small,
 The eye of faith is dim;
 But 'tis enough that Christ knows all,
 And I shall be with Him."²⁹

Don't you see Beloved? The songs we sing are songs of our victory in Christ. Habakkuk wrote this song, because in spite of everything that he saw coming, he had every reason to sing, and leap, and spin for joy. As we sing this new song this morning "Christ Our Hope In Life and Death" consider the weight of these words:

What is our hope in life and death?
 Christ alone, Christ alone
 What is our only confidence?
 That our souls to Him belong
 Who holds our days within His hand?
 What comes, apart from His command?
 And what will keep us to the end?
 The love of Christ, in which we stand

Unto the grave, what will we sing?
 "Christ, He lives; Christ, He lives!"
 And what reward will heaven bring?
 Everlasting life with Him

²⁹ Source: <https://disrn.com/news/ravi-zacharias-has-died-at-74>

There we will rise to meet the Lord
 Then sin and death will be destroyed
 And we will feast in endless joy
 When Christ is ours forevermore³⁰

What song can your soul sing?

Dear unbeliever, what song can your soul sing this morning? Can you sing of a future victory after death? Can you sing of a Redeemer who knows all of your sins and but who loves you still? Can you sing about Him who was crucified for sinners? And who rose from the dead on the third day? You can this morning. Your sin can be put away this morning. Not by you. Not by promising to be better or do more. But it can be put away by looking to the One whom we sing about. Jesus Christ, the Son of God. If you trust Him this morning, you will sing about Him, and to Him forever, and with Him forever. “Whoever believes in him is not condemned.” “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life.” “Whoever drinks of the water that [He gives] will never be thirsty again.” “Whoever...believes him...does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.” Don’t you want to sing a new song?

The loss of all things

Dear Christian, Habakkuk has shown you how to rejoice even when you face the loss of all things. The Lord is yours by the covenant that Christ purchased with His own blood.

What truth can calm the troubled soul?
 God is good, God is good
 Where is His grace and goodness known?
 In our great Redeemer's blood³¹

³⁰ Words and Music by Keith Getty, Matt Boswell, Jordan Kauflin, Matt Merker, Matt Papa

³¹ *ibid*

