

HABAKKUK CHAPTER 3(C)

For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope. (Romans 15:4).

(4) For. . . —These words of the Old Testament may rightly be taken as having a bearing upon us, "For," &c.

Through patience and comfort of the scriptures—i.e., "by the patience and comfort which the Scriptures afford." The promises and consolations of Scripture support the Christian under his trials, and enable him to endure them not only patiently but cheerfully.

Might have hope.—Literally, the hope—i.e., the Messianic hope. The promises of Scripture centre in the hope of the future Messianic glory, and the fortitude with which the Christian endures his trials is to be sustained by that hope, and itself reacts upon the hope and makes it held with firmer tenacity. [Ellicott].

¹³ Thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people, even for salvation with thine anointed; thou woundedst the head out of the house of the wicked, by discovering the foundation unto the neck. Selah.

For this one final time, I will bring to your remembrance that the lion's share of this third chapter of Habakkuk addresses the mighty power of our God, and the many nuances of that power. Please keep that overarching thought in mind as we make our way through the rest of this book.

When one commences to examine the strengths and energies of the Lord of Hosts, one immediately sees salvation; specifically, the salvation of the Lord's people for their deliverance and protection. **When they went from one nation to another, from one kingdom to another people; he suffered no man to do them wrong: yea, he reprov'd kings for their sakes; saying, touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm.** (Psalm 105:13-15).

When this verse speaks of God going forth for the salvation of his anointed or chosen people, we are to think of such persons as Moses, Joshua and David, that is to say from the beginning, God has delivered his people either in person, or by the hand of an agent. Consider in that regard the following passage from Isaiah 63:11-14: **Then he remembered the days of old, Moses, and his people, saying, Where is he that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of his flock? Where is he that put his holy Spirit within him? That led them by the right hand of Moses with his glorious arm, dividing the water before them, to make himself an everlasting name? That led them through the deep, as an horse in the wilderness, that they should not stumble? As a beast goeth down into the valley, the Spirit of the Lord caused him to rest: so didst thou lead thy people, to make thyself a glorious name.** A more concise statement of this concept is found at Psalm 77:20: **Thou leddest thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.**

This mighty work of salvation is accomplished, we are told in this verse, through the crushing and destruction of the wicked, wounding their head. **He shall judge among the heathen, he shall fill the places with the dead bodies; he shall wound the heads over many countries.** (Psalm 110:6).

“Discovering the foundation unto the neck” – this is a thorough, complete and successful destruction of the wicked, such as we read of in Amos 2:9: **Yet destroyed I the Amorite before them, whose height was like the height of the cedars, and he was strong as the oaks; yet I destroyed his fruit from above, and his roots from beneath.** The Psalmist David sings of this destruction in Psalm 68, verses 20 and 21: **He that is our God is the God of salvation; and unto God the Lord belong the issues from death. But God shall wound the head of his enemies, and the hairy scalp of such an one as goeth on still in his trespasses.**

¹⁴Thou didst strike through with his staves the head of his villages: they came out as a whirlwind to scatter me: their rejoicing was as to devour the poor secretly.

The first part of this verse, which one commentator labels “obscure”, can likely be paraphrased this way: Thou dost pierce with his spears the head of his (the enemy’s) princes. In other words, the word translated “villages” can also mean “princes”, such as we see in Judges 5:7: **The villages ceased, they ceased in Israel, until that I Deborah arose, that I arose a mother in Israel.**

At times, the enemies of God come forth like a whirlwind. They invade from every side, like a tempest made up of contrary and blasting winds and exhalations, moving violently and irregularly. Jeremiah describes the phenomenon at chapter 4, verses 12 and 13: **Even a full wind from those places shall come unto me: now also will I give sentence against them. Behold, he shall come up as clouds, and his chariots shall be as a whirlwind: his horses are swifter than eagles.** Of a certainty this small assembly has experienced such an onslaught on more than one occasion, which is strong evidence that this church is a genuine church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Their hope is to devour the poor people of God secretly. They are very sneaky and treacherous. **Like as a lion that is greedy of his prey, and as it were a young lion lurking in secret places.** (Psalm 17:12). **He lieth in wait secretly as a lion in his den: he lieth in wait to catch the poor: he doth catch the poor, when he draweth him into his net.** (Psalm 10:9). If you have ever watched these hungry, hunting wild (yet majestic) animals at work – like on the Netflix series entitled *Animals* and many other places (incredible photography) – you understand quickly that this is a deadly business. They want our blood! Our remedy, oft stated in Scripture, goes like this: **Arise, O Lord, disappoint him, cast him down: deliver my soul from the wicked[.]** (Psalm 17:13).

¹⁵ Thou didst walk through the sea with thine horses, through the heap of great waters.

Habakkuk seems to be most intrigued with earlier salvation events involving waters and seas. Reference is made to earlier comments on those verses, such as Habakkuk 3:8 and 10.

An additional thought present in this verse is the idea that God was literally there when the children of Israel were led through the Red Sea and the Jordan. *He who "is wholly everywhere but the whole of Him nowhere" manifested His Presence there.* (Barnes) Stated otherwise, God, in the flesh, was walking in and on the water. No obstacle could, or can, prevent God when leading his people to their inheritance, whether the Red Sea, Jordan, or figurative waves of foes raging against them; he stills **the noise of the seas, the noise of their waves, and the tumult of the people.** (Psalm 65:7). The idea here is beautifully captured in Psalm 77:19: **Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known.**

¹⁶When I heard, my belly trembled; my lips quivered at the voice: rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble: when he cometh up unto the people, he will invade them with his troops.

Here, the prophet returns to his contemplation of the revelation he earlier addressed in chapter 1 concerning the calamities to be brought on the Jewish people and, by logical extension, on all those who reject Christ.

It is hard to imagine more descriptive language than that which we see here as it relates to a colorful depiction of abject human fear. When your core trembles and your lips quiver, you're scared! When rottenness enters your bones, those bones fail and you can no longer stand up. Habakkuk is physically experiencing a profound fear of God and his judgments. As Benson describes: *A consternation and shaking seized me, and I could not speak for grief and astonishment, at being informed what great miseries were coming upon my nation.*

The faithful saints are the ones who alone tremble at the voice and judgments of the Almighty God. The Esaus of the world chock it up to

Mother Nature and just the “way things are.” But not the children of God; they singularly recognize where earth judgments come from and shake with amazement and awe. Consider these thoughts by Matthew Poole as to the nature and extent of that reaction: *Rottenness entered my bones; a consumption and decay of all my strength; a languishing of my spirits, and a declining of my rigour: a very usual effect of great fears. * * * I was all shaken, as with an earthquake, no part was free or unshaken.*

When this text speaks of the belly, it is a reference to the inward parts of the human body, the very spirit of man. **The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord, searching all the inward parts of the belly.** (Proverbs 20:27).

In the midst of all this, Habakkuk’s prayer is that he should be resting quiet in the day of trouble. Now THAT is a top notch prayer. That is surely our daily prayer.

Habakkuk, who begins this potent verse with fear and trembling, ends it with joy and triumph. **Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of thy law; that thou mayest give him rest from the days of adversity, until the pit be digged for the wicked.** (Psalm 94:12-13). *He who fears God and his judgments betimes, shall rest in perfect tranquility when those judgments come.* (Barnes). Indeed, the true and only path to rest is through such fear.

¹⁷ Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls:

¹⁸ Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation.

Here we must look at these two verses together as they clearly express one overall thought. In fact, the “colon” at the end of verse 17 suggests the text begun in verse 17 carries over to the following verse. Said otherwise, these two verses combined make up one (admittedly lengthy) sentence.

The overarching premise of Habakkuk's two-verse statement is this: Though all outward means of support should fail, yet will I still have a firm confidence in the power, goodness, and faithfulness of God, that he will preserve me, and supply me with all things necessary; and therefore, amidst the most threatening appearances of affairs, I shall still preserve inward peace and serenity of mind, as trusting in him in whom is everlasting strength. **Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the Lord forever: for in the Lord JEHOVAH is everlasting strength: for he bringeth down them that dwell on high; the lofty city, he layeth it low; he layeth it low, even to the ground; he bringeth it even to the dust.** (Isaiah 26:3-5).

Habakkuk here covers the waterfront of human need. Fruit, oil, wine, grain and meat are all mentioned. **And wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine, and bread which strengtheneth man's heart.** (Psalm 104:15). Habakkuk speaks not of privation or partial failure of human necessities, but of the entire loss of all things -- no meat from the fields, no fruit, no vegetables, no grain, no herd in the stalls, and what then, is the unspoken question.

The answer comes in verse 18 which speaks of rejoicing and joy in the God of our salvation. This in spite of all the afflictions contemplated in verse 17. All of which brings to mind Paul's testimony found at Romans 8:35-39: **Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

This is remarkable and laudable faith Habakkuk displays. Would that we could be similarly inclined is our prayer. See if this helps: *"In God my*

Jesus." In Him his joy begins, to Him and in Him it flows back and on; before he ventures, amid all the desolation, to speak of joy, he names the Name of God, and, as it were, stays himself in God, is enveloped and wrapped round in God; said I (the words stand in this order) "and I in the Lord would shout for joy." (Benson)

¹⁹ The LORD God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places. To the chief singer on my stringed instruments.

Habakkuk concludes this musical number on a high note (no pun intended) with this final verse. All strength comes from the Lord God – for God's chosen people, true then, true now! **It is God that girdeth me with strength, and maketh my way perfect.** (Psalm 18:32).

And what about these hinds' feet walking in high places? **He maketh my feet like hinds' feet, and setteth me upon my high places.** (Psalm 18:33).

A hind is a deer, goat or ibex that can place her back feet exactly where her front feet stepped. Not one inch off! The hind is a sure footed, agile, swift and nimble animal. In times of danger she is able to climb impossible mountain terrains that others can't, run securely in high, dangerous places and not get off track. She is able to scale unusually difficult terrain and elude predators. For a video sample of this phenomenon, take a look at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RG9TMn1FJzc&list=PL7L4zu8bMDrUoGUjuLoojRYhHFvsoZdaE> and prepare to have your stomach jump into your throat.

According to our verse, God gives these attributes and characteristics to his people.

The "hinds' feet" indicate the strength and elasticity of the prophet's confidence; the "high places" are, as Kleinert observes, "the heights of salvation which stand at the end of the way of tribulation, and which only the righteous man can climb by the confidence of faith." (Ellicott). Those heights are a wonderful place to be; they can only be reached with experience and the kindness of a merciful God.

"He will make my feet like hinds," which bound upward through His imparted strength, trod, when scared by alarms here below, flee tearless to their native reeks, spring from height to height, and at last shew themselves on some high peak, and standing on the Rock, look down on the whole world below their feet and upward on high. (Barnes).

To close, please note that singing and stringed instruments are a good thing in the worship of God and in the proclaiming of his mighty works. There are no less than 77 verses in the Bible discussing musical instruments in God's interaction with his people. We will close today with one such passage that also just happens to end the Psalms: **Praise him with the sound of the trumpet: praise him with the psaltery and harp. Praise him with the timbrel and dance: praise him with stringed instruments and organs. Praise him upon the loud cymbals: praise him upon the high sounding cymbals. Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord. Praise ye the Lord.** (Psalm 150:3-6).