

# All-Sufficient

by J. K. POPHAM

***"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; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." (Habakkuk 3:17,18)***

THIS sublime chapter, or psalm, or song, sets forth the almighty God in His tremendousness, His glorious works. But it opens mournfully, tremblingly: "O Lord," says the prophet, "I have heard Thy speech, and was afraid." He had heard what he had been inspired to write in the previous chapters of God's judgments on the wicked, of the purity of God's eyes, making it impossible for Him to behold iniquity and look upon sin without infinite abhorrence. He had heard the threatenings of God upon the wicked, of the desolations of His people, and the comings forth of God for the redemption of His people. And he looked upon the people of God in their low condition, their threatened captivity, and cried, "Revive Thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known do this great thing: in wrath remember mercy." It is a great thing to be kept alive in famine, to have your souls exercised toward God when He is not sensibly with you; when you are not enjoying His gracious presence, to be kept hungry and thirsty. A hungry soul is a soul that cannot do without God; a soul that has Him not in the rich enjoyment of Him, but cannot do without Him; a soul that could not be satisfied if you could give him the whole world, but who enters somewhat into the word, "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" A thirsty soul is one who cannot bring forth fruit unto God without water, cannot be satisfied; feels his heart like parched ground, until that shall come that is promised: "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground." (Isa. 44:3) Or, as in the same Prophet the Lord says, likening His people to a vineyard of red wine, which vineyard is His, and for which He cares, "I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." (Isa. 27:3) And this was the prayer of the prophet Habakkuk: "Do water us, preserve us." Do you feel, in your own cases, that there is an absence of God from you? that you do not get near to Him as you would? that there is a withholding of communications, communications which formerly you had, in the power of which you lived, and loved Him, and held Him and would not let Him go? communications which astonished you, and filled you, and melted you, make you contrite, and happy beyond all expression; but those sweet communications have ceased for the most part? It is now a little here, and just a little there, to keep you from perishing; but the richness, the freeness, the greatness of God in communicating mercies to you and love, you miss. "Revive Thy work." "Wilt Thou not revive us again, that Thy people may rejoice in Thee?"

The prophet ascribes greatness to God, brightness, and glory. But there is a picture before him, desolation, a lack of everything that is needful to sustain life and peace and comfort. He looks at this desolation set before him: "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." Think of it, just want, desolation; the things that you want, that are needful to sustain you in being and in well-being, all gone. It is

difficult to picture this to ourselves, as it respects our own cases. We have daily bread, we have many comforts, great mercies, we have friends, home life, and fellowship with friends, comforts on every side. Now think of all this removed, your substance gone, your cupboard empty, your table bare, the wonted full stalls vacant, and desolation on all sides.

Then the prophet breaks out in the language of faith. His eye had been taken, so to speak, from the scene of emptiness and darkness, and carried up to God, the Maker of heaven and earth and all that is therein, the sea and all that is therein; God, whose are the gold and the silver, and the cattle upon a thousand hills, in whose hand is every necessary good; the God in whom the prophet lived and moved and had his being, and from whom he derived his well-being, the God of mercy, of grace, of love, of salvation. And his eye, favoured with light, looked at this great One, spreading out like wings of light over him, and over the scene of emptiness on which he had been looking; and seeing God, he could no longer see emptiness; seeing God, he could no longer see poverty and want, but breaks out into this triumphant language: "Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." An empty earth, an empty purse, and a full God, and the latter is more than the former. The emptiness is nothing to Him who has everything, and is everything, that can be needed and desired. This is no empty sentiment; it is a great reality, an illustration of that scripture, "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." (Heb. 11:1) If you have this faith drawn into exercise on this God, whatever your lacks may be, whatever your view of troubles that you have or anticipate, and apprehend with fear and trembling, "There is enough in God for me," you will say.

It was something like this in the case of God's coming to Abraham. Said the Lord to him, "I am the almighty God: walk before Me, and be thou perfect. I am God all-sufficient, I spread Myself over you, walk before Me, and be sincere." You would not think that at that moment Abraham would look up to God and say, "Lord, I have everything I want, much cattle, many servants." No. You would believe that that very word spoken to Abraham would, as it were, empty the earth to him, and make him content with God, satisfied with God.

And this evening, as enabled, this is how I would speak, namely, try to show the sufficiency of God for everything that we need here, that we need for life and godliness, and that we shall need for eternity. "Yet I will rejoice in the Lord." As if the prophet should say, "This barren fig tree, this empty vine, this unyielding, fruitless field, this clean stall, cannot affect me so as to depress me, and make me wonder what I shall do tomorrow; for I see and believe in a good and a full God. Therefore in Him I will rejoice."

What is God sufficient for? He is sufficient for our life. For our temporal life, which is but for a very short time, He is sufficient. "If I were hungry," He says, "I would not tell thee; the gold and the silver, and the cattle on a thousand hills, they all belong to Me." When Moses limited the Holy One of Israel with regard to feeding the people in the wilderness, the Lord put this question to him, "Is the Lord's hand waxed short?" He is sufficient to give what is needed, sufficient to open ways of escape, to travel "in the greatness of His strength," and to bring deliverances; to command deliverances for His people when they are perplexed, and shut up, and unable to come forth from any particular thing or trouble. He is sufficient for that. And He has given proofs of it to some here; good, blessed, pleasant proofs of His sufficiency He has given, and may we be thankful.

But He is sufficient for spiritual life, a life that is above this natural life, a life that is to abide when this natural life ceases, when our poor bodies are in the grave. Life is in Him. Says Paul, "Your life is hid with Christ in God." (Col. 3:3) You are dead in yourselves, but "your life is hid with Christ in God," and there is sufficiency there. "I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish." (John 10:27,28) It is not to be found anywhere else. Judgments may come, troubles will befall, difficulties will perplex, the enemy may roar and threaten death; but God opens at times this fullness of life, which is in His beloved Son, and says, "Because I live, ye shall live also." (John 14:19) I will bring you through." Says Hart,

"He is the feeble and the faint  
His mighty aid makes known;  
And when their languid life is spent,  
Supplies it with His own."

And so the people of God are led up to Him for their eternal life, believing, and knowing well in themselves, that no man can keep alive his own soul; that "a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth," but in God; and that the life must come from Him in renewed supplies of it by the Spirit. The sinner is brought to say, "Though I am dead in myself, and death is about me, yet I will rejoice in this, that the Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" God is sufficient; yea, sufficient for each child of His. "I give unto them eternal life." The stock and the fullness of this life the Lord has put in His dear Son. "This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son." (1 John 5:11)

And is it not wonderfully sweet to find supplies of that life coming into our hearts? to find in the midst of some captivity a reviving in our souls, a strengthening of faith, a drawing out of our love to the Lord, a fixing of our hope in Him, spoken of by Peter as setting our hope in God, and believing in God through the resurrection of Jesus Christ? This is evidenced to each one who receives it, that God is sufficient. What an amazing thing it is to be revived! to have new life poured upon your soul, like fresh rain coming down upon the parched earth! It fills it, it draws up the virtue that is in it into the roots of trees and plants, making them fruitful. So the new life, communicated from time to time, draws up the souls of God's people in the exercise of faith and hope and love, and fills them with the fruits of the Spirit, "the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the praise and glory of God." (Phil. 1:11) And the Lord is sufficient to make this life so vigorous, so to replenish, strengthen, and increase it, as that the earth loses its desirability in a very important and sweet sense. People, being natural, and having strong natural affections and appetites, are made by the fear of God very careful about speaking lightly of these divine things; but sometimes, if they did not speak about them, the stones would cry out against them. Is God sufficient to you? That He is sufficient for you, there is no doubt; is He sufficient to you in your experience? Do you perceive that all that you need for a growth, for a comely walk, worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called, is in God? He is sufficient for it all.

"Yet I will rejoice in the Lord." I will rejoice in His power. The power of Christ was enough for the apostle Paul in his affliction; and so good to him was that power as it came into his heart and rested on him, that he said he would gladly glory in his infirmity, in order that that power might rest upon him. How much better is this than the spirit of a man sustaining his infirmity, that spirit

which makes us say sometimes, "We will bear it as well as we can!" How much better is it to fall in sensible weakness, feeling the corruptions of your nature, in dependence on the Lord, looking to Him to sustain you, to hold you up! "Hold up my goings in Thy paths, that my footsteps slip not," is a prayer that has reference to the power of Christ. Do you believe the Lord can keep you by that power, can carry you through, bring you honourably to your grave? Do you believe that that power can maintain the work of grace that is begun? can from time to time so strengthen and draw faith into exercise on Christ as to enable you to "bear the unequal strife, and wage the war within?" believing that though your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour, he shall not be permitted to devour you, because of the great power that shall cover you as a protecting shield? "I will rejoice" in this: "When I am weak, then am I strong." To his son Timothy, Paul the aged gave that gospel direction: "Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." And this grace, this strength that is in Christ Jesus, is for use, for use in trouble, in affliction, under a cross, for conflict, for a strife that otherwise would indeed be unequal and too much for you.

This power of Christ shall bring every one in whom it is exercised, to be more than a conqueror. I will rejoice in this, that there is power in the dear and ever gracious Lord Jesus. Whatever you want, this power will supply. Who was it that smote the rock in the wilderness, that Rock that still follows the church? Who was it that sent waters gushing out for the people, that their thirst might be assuaged? that rained down manna every morning, so that their hunger was satisfied? that protected them night by night by the pillar of fire, and guided them day by day by the cloud? O, it was a good God, of whom and unto whom they sang when they were brought through the Red Sea. That same blessed Rock follows the church, that same heavenly food, Jesus Christ, is given still, and there is a sufficiency. This meets the cases of all hungry people, people who hunger for God, hunger and thirst for righteousness. It meets them so that when they look into their own barrenness and deadness and unbelief, and to the whole world as being empty to them, empty of all that is desirable for their souls, they then are brought to say with a gracious, a spiritual apprehension, "Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation;" because He is powerful, almighty to save, almighty to sustain, almighty to fight our battles, almighty to bring us honourably through all our difficulties, and to open ways of escape out of affliction. What a great God we have! This God is the God we adore, all-sufficient. It is celebrated in the hymn:

"A fullness resides in Jesus our Head,  
And ever abides to answer our need."

And if it please the eternal Spirit to open that fullness to us, we shall feel, in some measure at least, the truth of this, and enter into it as for ourselves: "Yet I will rejoice in the Lord." Despair cannot come to you, if this is before your faith. You never can despair, if you see this sufficient One, this ever mighty Saviour, whose brightness comes forth, and shows you where the hiding of His power is.

And not only this, but you will find that you are at times led to look to Him alone for those things that are particularly needed by people who are daily failing and falling. As for instance, what a God He is of pardons! He multiplies pardons, and we need this, greatly need it; day by day there is a falling, a failing, and a defiling of self. This defiling of self brings all who feel it to a very

close quarter, because it shuts them out from God. You understand me. You cannot wipe your mouth, like the wanton creature of the Proverbs, and say, "It is naught, it is naught; what have I done?" If you are really sensible of defilement, and the fear of God if in exercise in you, faith will say there is only one way back to God for you, from whom in your heart you have departed; and that way is by the blood of the everlasting covenant. No other way back. The Fountain opened for sin and uncleanness (Zech. 13:1) this is sufficient. Everything about you will find to be insufficient for this, everything; and particularly when, it may be, some trouble comes in providence, and conscience says, "You have deserved it, and very much more;" conscience says in you. "That is true, the accusation is true, there is no excuse." One of the best things you can feel is to have all excuses taken out of your heart, to just go flat down before the Lord. When you are feeling how some trouble comes like a voice, "You have deserved this;" then to say, "O Lord, I have heard Thy voice, and am afraid, afraid of what is coming. Remember not against me former iniquities, deal not with me according to my sin nor reward me so; remember mercy." Now in this case, where an honest conscience speaks, where the Holy Spirit teaches, there will be a looking to the Fountain which is opened for sin and uncleanness. I cannot express what some of you feel, what I know and feel in my own case the perpetual departing from God that there is in the heart. How rare it is to find your affections fixed for a very short time on the Lord! How constantly you in some way depart! You cast a look on some old thing, some old pleasure, and wish it back, and your heart has gone. You look at something that is dangled before your eyes by the tempter, and your heart has gone. You think some ungodly thought, and in a moment your heart has gone. It is no trifle; it is a solemn thing, as every one feels who is exercised in this way. Trouble comes: it brings the very worst out of you. You begin to fret, and wish it were otherwise than it is with you; you look at the trouble: "Why has it come?" Conscience may say, "You need it, you need it." Yet you may again and again try to browbeat and trample on conscience for a time, until the Holy Ghost puts an effectual touch to the business; and then you feel it, and say, "Lord, I have heard Thy voice, and am afraid. I will get me to my tower, I will stand upon my watch, to see what the Lord will say, and what I shall answer when I am reproved of Him." And then the Holy Spirit will bring this to you, and nothing else will do the turn, the Fountain opened for sin and uncleanness, and you will say, "Now this is the way back.

"Could my tears for ever flow,  
All for sin could not atone."

This is the way back the atonement of Jesus Christ, and I will rejoice in that. An empty world, an empty heart, nothing here to nourish faith, everything rather to promote death and bondage. My soul shall rejoice in that powerful blood with which God purchased to church; and I will look to that to restore my soul, to purge, and to bring me again into the felt presence of a good God, that I may worship Him, and serve Him in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter."

"I will rejoice" in a covenant God, a covenant which is "ordered in all things and sure." We broke our covenant, we brought death and destruction to ourselves in our breach of our covenant. Now says the Lord, "I will make a new covenant with you, and it shall not be like that first covenant, which My covenant Israel brake, though I was a Husband to them. It shall be this, I will put it into their heart, I will write it in their mind; I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people. And I will teach each one of them, and I will forgive all their sins, and remember their iniquities no more. I will not alter the thing that has gone out of my lips, I will not break My

covenant." (Jer.31:31-34) And here what has the Lord given? Two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, that we guilty creature, empty of all goodness, might have a strong consolation. Two immutable things, to afford that strong consolation that we need the promise and the oath of God. He would not break a naked promise, could not; but because of the poor, unbelieving hearts that we have, and our readiness to question things, He confirmed His promise with an oath, and swore by Himself, because He could swear by no greater. He said, "Surely in blessing I will bless thee." You look within, perhaps, and say, "But, Lord, look at what I am, look at what I have done. I look at it, wilt Thou?" And He will say, "Your sins and iniquities I will remember no more. This is My covenant promise: I will put My law into their heart, I will write it in their mind. I will be their God, they shall be My people." No contingency here, no if, no but; no one single thing of that nature, but "I will," and "they shall." This makes them walk in His covenant love and power. It is that bright light which, like the sun coming out of his chamber to run a race, runs into the soul and into the dark places of the heart, and teaches what God is; and that teaching brings the soul to worship and adore. This removes carelessness, this slays the dominion of unbelief, this makes the heart loyal to its God, this brings a sinner to say, "There is none worthy of trust but God, none can help me but God, none can bring me through but God, none can supply my needs but God, and He can do all." "Yet I will rejoice in the Lord." Though the earth be empty, I will rejoice in the Lord." Though the earth be empty, I will rejoice in Him, though everything that is necessary for sustenance be gone, He remains. And He remains in the covenant, the covenant "ordered in all things and sure."

Well, do you find it enough at any time? Do you find this faith in a full Christ to bring you near to Him? One would believe that Habakkuk came very near to his God at this time. Faith, so to express it, would leap over all the desolation and emptiness of the earth, to reach God in heaven. It would bring him near to his God. Faith sometimes takes a very short cut to reach God; and one of the nearest ways that it finds is across emptiness, a desert arid, dry, and full of death. Faith will get right across it in a moment, and have the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." "Yet I will rejoice in the Lord."

There is a good deal to depress us, a good deal to depress every child of God in himself. A world of iniquity, what a depressing thing that is! You cannot get away from it. All the foolish Arminianism, in its exhortations to people to do this and not allow that, will not stand here. It is no good in this place. What the soul wants is a good God, seen by precious faith; a God who says, "Come to Me," and who, saying it, draws the person to whom He says it to Himself; a God who shows Himself to be sufficient, to have enough for all necessities, enough for all desires, however large those desires may be; enough for life, for trouble, for want, for emptiness, for hunger, for thirst, for temptation, for battle; enough for death, enough for eternity. And yet a poor, unbelieving heart says, "O what should I do, if I lost this friend? What shall I do, if that stream dries up? What shall I do, if I lose that and the other? That is what a poor, unbelieving heart says, and probably a good many such hearts here may be saying, "That is exactly my case." Why, my friends, all that you need is not an assurance that your friend will be continued to you, that that supply will continue, that that stream will go on running. That is not what is necessary. All that is necessary is for the Holy Ghost to show to you this God. "Yet I will rejoice in the Lord." "What! with all this emptiness?" Yes. The prophet saw that his God had enough. Grace to save thee from thy fears, power to hold thee up against thy foes, wisdom to guide thee through thy perplexities, mercy to comfort thee in thy temporal misery, goodness to lead thee to

repentance, and a covenant to stand by thee, what a God He is! infinite in His goodness, infinite in His mercy, infinite in His pardons! So we build well, if through grace we build here. We are well rooted and grounded, if we are rooted in Jesus Christ. What harm can reach you, what want can destroy you, what poison can kill you, what devil can overthrow you, if you are rooted and grounded here? As the prophet was for doubtless at this time he was well rooted and grounded in his good God, so his faith carried him above the things of time and sense, and brought him to this good place.

Some of you may have left trouble in your houses, may have been living, perhaps, in your troubles even while sitting here, your mind every moment recurring to them, and you may be saying, "What shall we do? What will become of us? How shall we get through this or that?" You need just this one thing, may the Lord give it to you a sight by precious faith of Himself. And if you get that, you will really say, "God is enough for me; enough for my case, for my wants." May it please Him to manifest Himself to us. His unsearchable riches are here, all that a good God can give is here, in His dearly beloved Son Incarnate. May it please the Holy Spirit to speak such a kind and full word as this to us, that we, with the prophet, may rejoice in the God of our salvation, and find that our feet are made like hinds' feet, and that He causes us to walk upon our high places. Amen.