

## The Lord is My Portion and My Hope Lamentations 3:24

From John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Prophet Jeremiah and Lamentations*, trans. Rev. John Owen (Edinburgh, Scotland: Calvin Translation Society, 1843), Vol. V, 408-410, emphasis added; updated to modern American English.

### LECTURE TEN

In the last lecture the Prophet said that the *mercies* of God are renewed daily. This must indeed be viewed according to the apprehension of men, for to God belongs no change. But the mercies of God seem to be renewed when He for a time hides His face, and again becomes reconciled to us. The Prophet mentions *morning*; and he alludes, as I think, to this passage in the Psalms—"If weeping dwells with us in the evening, yet joy will return in the morning" (Psalm 30:5).

He then means that God hastens to succor men in misery. He subjoins the word *truth*, because a sense of God's mercy can never come to us except He offers it to us. Were then God to take away the promise, all the miserable would inevitably perish; for they can never lay hold on His mercy except through His word. This, then, is the reason why Scripture so often connects these two things together, even God's mercy and His faithfulness in fulfilling His promises. It now follows, —

**Lamentations 3:24** "The LORD is my portion," says my soul; "therefore will I hope in Him."

The Prophet teaches us in this verse that we cannot stand firm in adversities, except we be content with God alone and His favor; for as soon as we depart from Him, any adversity that may happen to us will cause our faith to fail. It is then the only true foundation of patience and hope to trust in God alone; and this is the case when we are persuaded that His favor is sufficient for our perfect safety. In this sense it is that David calls God his portion (Psalm 16:5). But there is in the words an implied contrast, for most men seek their happiness apart from God. All desire to be happy, but as the thoughts of men wander here and there, there is nothing more difficult than so to fix all our hopes in God so as to disregard all other things.

This then is the doctrine which the Prophet now handles, when he says, that those alone could hope, that is, persevere in hope and patience, who have so received God as their portion as to be satisfied with Him alone, and to seek nothing else besides Him. But he speaks emphatically, that his *soul* had thus *said*.

Even the unbelieving are ashamed to deny what we have stated, that the whole of our salvation and happiness is found in God alone. Then the unbelieving also confess that God is the fountain of all blessings, and that they ought to acquiesce in Him; but with the mouth only they confess this, while they believe nothing less. This then is the reason why the Prophet ascribes what he says to his soul, as though he had said, that he did not boast, like hypocrites, that God was his portion, but that of this he had a thorough conviction. *My soul* has said, that is, I am fully convinced that God is *my portion*; therefore will I hope in Him. We now understand the meaning of this passage.

It remains for us to make an application of this doctrine. That we may not then fail in adversities, let us bear in mind this truth, that all our thoughts will ever wander and go astray, until we are fully persuaded that God alone is sufficient for us, so that He may become alone our heritage. For all who are not satisfied with God alone, are immediately seized with impatience, whenever famine oppresses them, or sword threatens them, or any other grievous calamity. And for this reason Paul also says, "If God be for us, who can be against us? I am persuaded that neither famine, nor nakedness, nor sword, nor death, nor life, can separate me from the love of God, which is in Christ" (Romans 8:31, 35-39).

Then Paul lays hold of the paternal favor of God as a ground of solid confidence; for the words in Christ sufficiently show that those are mistaken interpreters who take this love passively, as though he had said that the faithful would never cease to love God, though He exercised them with many afflictions. But Paul meant that the faithful ought so to fix their minds on God alone, that whatever might happen, they would not yet cease to glory in Him. Why? because God is their life in death, their light in darkness, their rest in war and tumult, their abundance in penury [poverty] and want. It is in the same sense our Prophet now says, when he teaches that none hope in God but those who build on His paternal favor alone, so that they seek nothing else but to have Him propitious to them.