

# Jesus Has the Monopoly on Victory



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Many of us, whether we live in the United States or one of many other countries around the world, have heard of the board game called *Monopoly* or have enjoyed playing it with family and friends. This is a game I have played and enjoyed since my years in college. Derived from a board game called *The Landlord's Game* invented in 1903 by Lizzie Magie, its popularity has continued for more than a century. It is currently licensed locally in more than 110 countries and printed in more than 40 languages.

In a typical game, players roll two dice to move tokens around the game board, buying and trading properties, developing them with houses and hotels once properties with the same color are acquired, and collecting rent from their opponents. Money can also be gained or lost through Chance and Community Chest cards, and tax squares. Players can end up in jail, where they cannot leave until one of several conditions have been met; and the game has a variety of customized house rules that can be used. The winner of the game is the person who has driven his opponents into bankruptcy.

A few years ago, I purchased an online version of this game for my mobile device. I was very pleased with its design, for it looked exactly like the board game, all the way down to the dice and player tokens. It was very easy to play using the official rules, customized rules, with friends online, or

against the artificial intelligence (AI/computer). While I have played with family online, I have often played against the AI.

According to the creators of this online version, the algorithms controlling the game's chance mechanics are statistically random. But I have noticed that the AI, from seeming craftiness, often skips its token over the properties I own, while seemingly making sure my token often lands on its properties or incur tax penalties. However, I noticed a pattern in games with the AI. Its "greedy tendencies" were the means for its defeat. When going around the board, if I made sure I gained a property in all of the eight street blocks, even if some properties had to be bought from the AI at an exorbitant price, the AI would be unable to get a monopoly of a street block and develop them with houses and hotels to gain higher rent revenue from me. With patience, over time I would be able to get a few monopolies of street blocks and develop them. No matter how long the AI may avoid them on the board, or how many setbacks may occur to me in the game, inevitably the AI would go bankrupt and lose the game.

Life can often seem like a *Monopoly* game. We work to build wealth and provide for ourselves and our families as we deal with the ups and downs of living in a sinful world. We have joyous times such as the birth of a new child or a promotion at work; or we go through terrible times such as illness, unemployment, or the death of close family or friends. Along with this, occasions too often arise where injustice on the national and personal level seems to be rewarded and being righteous brings punishment.

The prophet Habakkuk struggled with these issues of life on earth. He struggled with how God could allow wicked individuals and nations to prosper as they oppressed those unable to defend themselves against them. He said:

"How long, Lord, will I call for help, and You will not hear?"

I cry to You, 'Violence!' Yet You do not save. Why do You make me see iniquity, and cause me to look on wickedness? Yes, destruction and violence are before me; strife exists and contention arises." ([Habakkuk 1:2-4](#))

Many of us can relate to Habakkuk's feelings of frustration and despair as we see similar things take place in our lives under the sun. It is even tempting at times, as Asaph expressed in Psalm 73, to join the wicked since they seemingly are not held accountable for their evil deeds, but instead, profit fabulously from them.

Yet, the hopeful message given by the Lord to Habakkuk was that terrible times or oppression do not last forever (though it may seem like it sometimes). In His perfect time and way, the Lord will set things right. We just need to trust Him and wait for the outworking of His plan.

"Then the LORD answered me and said, 'Record the vision and inscribe it on tablets, that the one who reads it may run. For the vision is yet for the appointed time; it hastens toward the goal and it will not fail. Though it tarries, wait for it; for it will certainly come, it will not delay. Behold, as for the proud one, his soul is not right within him; **but the righteous will live by his faith.**'" (Habakkuk 2:2-4)

Living by faith in God helps to provide endurance through the happenings of life. It provides a true hope, a sustaining anticipation especially when things are generally not going very well. That is how Habakkuk could end his book with this affirmation:

"Though the fig tree should not blossom and there be no fruit on the vines, though the yield of the olive should fail and the fields produce no food, though the flock should be cut off from the fold and there be no cattle in the stalls, yet **I will exult in the LORD, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation.**" (Habakkuk 3:17-18)

The apostle Peter expresses this same wonderful message. All who trust in Christ alone receive an inheritance that He earned through His life, death, and resurrection. It cannot be lost or stolen. It is incorruptible, undefiled and does not fade away.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has **caused us to be born again to a living hope** through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, **to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.** In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.” (1 Peter 1:3-9)

Many of us are familiar with the Hall of Faith in Hebrews 11. Often more attention is given to the blessings received by those who followed the calling of God and accomplished great things. But the last several verses speak of those who went through severe persecution and hardship yet maintained their faith in God and looked forward to His promises. In the midst of their suffering, they had hope in the Lord, who never fails to fulfil His promises.

“For time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets, who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made

strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received back their dead by resurrection; and others were tortured, not accepting their release, so that they might obtain a better resurrection; and others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated (men of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground. And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised, because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they would not be made perfect. Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.” (Hebrews 11:32-40; 12:1-3)

Do not lose hope or drop out of the race. God is faithful and cannot lie. He is utterly reliable and will keep all the promises that He has made. Because of this we can have the absolute assurance that nothing with which we struggle in this life will prevent God from keeping us on the path to heaven and getting us there. It is not our performance that determines His faithfulness, but His character.

So how does this relate to a *Monopoly* game app? The ups and down of the game, the setbacks, the frustrations at the AI “cheating” at times, are reminiscent of the events of life. In its own way the game has taught me patience and hope. For example, when the AI is unable to get a monopoly of a street

block, winning the game is assured. Likewise, Jesus has gone ahead and defeated the devil's attempt to monopolize my life, bankrupt and destroy it by dying for all of my sins on the cross and rising again from the dead. The faith He has granted as a gift carries me through the joys and sorrows of life, the triumphs and the tragedies, because the victory Jesus won beforehand assures my own in the end.

We can go through hardships in life patiently and with a joyful hope because Jesus has already won the victory at the cross, making the victory of all who trust in Him alone certain.

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