

The believer's hope is sure and steadfast (Hebrews 6:19). This hope is founded upon faith that our God can be trusted and will guarantee a great future!


### Concluding Thoughts

As we face injustices and disappointments, let us resolve to maintain faithfulness in God. Psalm 42:5, "Why are you in despair, my soul? And why are you restless within me? Wait for God, for I will again praise Him for the help of His presence, my God."

2 Corinthians 7:4-9, "(T)he extraordinary greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves; we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed."

When we struggle with Habakkuk's perplexity and feel like screaming because God seems to have forgotten us, let us not surrender to Despair but remember Psalm 34.

"It is impossible for that man to despair who remembers that his helper is Omnipotent." (Jeremy Taylor).



### TAKE-HOME LESSONS

1. There are times you want to "cry out"—but do not turn away from God!
2. Realize the threat of Despair and FIGHT against it!
3. Not everyone in the Church is perfect but not everyone is a disappointment!
4. Jehovah is our Helper (Psalm 42:5)!

Our Next Class Examines: "God Never Sleeps!"

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## LESSON 4 : THE DANGER OF DESPAIR

*A Study of Habakkuk*

# WHEN GOD SEEMS SILENT

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### DALRAIDA CHURCH OF CHRIST

Despair brings grave danger. "Ah! My friend, you may have sunk very low in sin and woe; but there is a thread of divine love that comes from heaven's throne, and it offered even to you. Seize that thread! It may appear small, but it is golden. Improve what you have, however little and more shall be given. That thin thread of love, if you will not neglect it, shall lift you from despair to rejoicing!"

There is no justified cause for despair in the believer's life. "Despair" literally means "to be without a way; to be at a total loss; without resource." It refers to a state in which there is no hope. Hope has evaporated. "Despair" dishonors God more than any other emotion. It degrades God to an impotent force and insinuates that He is either insufficient or unfaithful to His promised Word. "Despair" leads to a practical rejection of the Scriptures as God's absolute Word. "Despair" distorts the eyesight of saints by forcing them to look at the world rather than up to heaven's provisions (Hebrews 12:3).

Despair is a familiar foe for all followers of God (Luke 18:1). Paul struggled with it and won (2 Corinthians 1:8-10).

Habakkuk confesses that he was vulnerable to Despair's onslaught (1:2-4). He was "at the end of his rope." All hope had vanished. In 1:2 the phrase "cry out" literally means "to shout or roar" in pain. Habakkuk wanted to scream! The Hebrew indicates that Habakkuk had been protesting the injustices a long time. But, Habakkuk says that even if he screams it does not help. Despair had a chokehold on him.

Study this text and observe what it reveals about Despair. Using this as an acrostic outline we discover seven significant facts. These actions and attitudes are often confessed by those who think God has withdrawn from them Habakkuk shares the same emotions that Job confessed (3:23-26; 6:8; 7:3-11).

### **"D" - Despair DESTROYS faith in God (1:2)**

The term "LORD" is literally "Jehovah" and refers to the "Covenant God," who protected Israel after Sinai. As the "Covenant God," Jehovah was expected to uphold and protect. Habakkuk suggests that Jehovah is neglecting His covenant nation and the promised concern is lacking. Habakkuk had given up faith in the Covenant God.

Faith in God's power is always the first fatality when Despair attacks. When surrounded by the "impossible" we rule out God; forgetting His power and promises (Psalms 13:1,2; 22:1, 2; Daniel 9:13; Revelation 16:9-11).

A good illustration of this is found in Saul's defeat at Mt. Gilboa. His hope was buried by Despair because his faith failed (1 Samuel 28:15-20). Saul left the witch's hut at Endor pale, haggard, spirit depressed and courage sunken. Israel's leader had been conquered by Despair and the troops had no chance in battle. Habakkuk was close to this same defeat!

Modern saints quickly sympathize with this point. We often walk away from God, thinking He does not care. We often cry out to Him of the violence surrounding us and feel that He does not care.

Why is the truth ignored about teenage immorality, AIDS and violence? Why are over one-million babies murdered each year and their mutilated bodies used for everything from cosmetics to medical experimentation? How is it possible for leaders of a "God-fearing nation" to advocate "organ harvesting"? Where is God? Why does He allow horrible things to happen?

God's silence does not mean He has abandoned us!

### **"E"—it ENCOURAGES strife, quarrels, and bitterness (1:3b)**

When we allow Despair to drive us from God, we are left with only mortal understanding to confront injustice. And mortal wisdom is never adequate! (Jeremiah 10:23).

Those ensnared by Despair are marked by these actions:

- Blaming
- Fault-finding
- Grudges and resentment
- Self-consumed

Scriptures warn us about these destructive actions (Deuteronomy 28:65; Jeremiah 18:18; 26:11-14; Micah 7:1-6).

Habakkuk surveyed his society. It had abandoned God and followed Self. Despair nurtured robbery and insensitivity. God's people had broken into factions that bit and devoured each other. Despair promoted disturbance, hatred, and insensitivity. Witnessing society shook Habakkuk's faith in God.

### **"S" - SURRENDERS victory (1:2b)**

Despair leads us to surrender victory - we are convinced that there is no way we can "win"! We have no hope! (Jeremiah 18:12; Psalm 31:22a; Proverbs 24:10; Jeremiah 8:20).

Christians must profess an unyielding commitment (Hebrews 10:35-39). Be prepared for Despair's onslaught. Never give up your sure victory! (2 Corinthians 4:8; Romans 8:37-39).

### **"P" - PLACES all blame for evil on God (1:3)**

Despair distorts our faith. We blame God for what He has not done rather than seeing the good He has done (Job 9:17; Psalm 77:7-9; Lamentations 3:3-18; 5:22). Habakkuk failed to see that the evil came from man's wrong choices and not from God (James 1:13, 17).

### **"A" - ALWAYS sees the negative, never the positive (1:4)**

Habakkuk was so blinded by Despair that he could not see any positive qualities of God. His words describe a terrible situation:

- God's Word was viewed with contempt
- Justice was never visible
- Those upholding right were treated with hostility, threats, and treachery
- When captured by Despair we will see only the negatives (Job 3:1-26; Psalm 42:3, 10).

When Despair tempts you to see only the negatives look for the positives. You may have many negatives "before" you as Habakkuk did, but there are also many positives as well!

### **"I" - INSISTS upon "now" instead of waiting (1:2)**

Habakkuk had been praying about this a long time and wanted God to respond "right now." This is another subtle behavior of Despair. *It causes us to place God on our schedule rather us submitting to His schedule* (Jeremiah 18:12; 2 Peter 3:8-10). When we are tempted to insist that God respond on our time schedule, let us remember Habakkuk's lesson.

### **"R" - RUINS all hope for the future (1:3, 4)**

Habakkuk did not believe any good could come from the situation he faced. All future hope was dashed by Despair's control (Job 17:15; Proverbs 13:12). Hope is banished when faith is conquered by Despair (Deuteronomy 28:66).