

July 12, 2020 Dennis Gallaher Sabbath: Restoring Hope In Difficult Times

These days have a lot of disappointment and the putting off of all kinds of plans. This summer is not business as usual and the current difficulty has no borders. No matter what you believe about prejudice or politics, this season has robbed us in ways that could not have been predicted. Like the Prophet cries out...

Habakkuk 1:2 *How long, O LORD, will I call for help, and You will not hear?*

Our topic in this Sabbath season is HOPE. Real hope is not based on the affairs of this life. Biblical hope, God's kind of hope, is rooted in 2 foundations:

1) God's character! His nature and personality is:

- Full of mercy
- Abounding in kindness
- Overflowing with Everlasting Loving-kindness. **Jeremiah 31:3** *...I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have drawn you with loving-kindness.*

2) Eternity! Hope has eternity as our goal, not a hope in this world or on this Earth but is sown with our faithfulness here on this Earth into eternity. The entire world is looking for this hope.

A key attribute of hope can be found in **Proverbs 13:12** *Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but desire fulfilled is a tree of life.*

Hope deferred is a disappointment. It comes from needing to control all outcomes, needing to know all the reasons, or having to have all of the why questions answered asking, "Why is this happening?" What I hope for that doesn't happen is deferred hope. Proverbs tells us the truth. Proverbs gives it to me straight and to the point...My heart gets sick.

So, what do you do about deferred hope? This time of Sabbath provides hope but how? The following 3 key verses guide us through the hopeless years of Israel's history.

1. HOPE DEFERRED: Habakkuk 1:2 *How long, O Lord, will I call for help and you will not hear?* Have you ever asked that? Are you asking now? This is the "club of hope deferred" or the "society of sick hearts." The heart cries out to God, Why are you doing this? Do you hear our cry? God's response: **Habakkuk 1:5** *...Because I am doing something in your days – you would not believe if you were told.*

What are we talking about today? Fixing the virus, the economy, the politicians, the church, this church, the anarchy, the race relationships? The Lord has not told us yet what He is up to - it is prideful to assume that we already know. **Psalm 131** *O LORD, my heart is not proud, nor my eyes haughty; nor do I involve myself in great matters, or in things too difficult for me. Surely I have composed and quieted my soul; Like a weaned child rests against his mother, my soul is like a weaned child within me. O Israel, hope in the LORD from this time forth and forever.* Make this Psalm a prayer for today.

A Poem... Oh blows that smite! Oh hurts that pierce this shrinking heart of mine!
What are they but the Master's tools, Forming a work divine.

We might not know what God is doing but we can know that what God is doing is divine! When we stop asking God to come to our level then faith is born. **Habakkuk 2:4** *Behold, as for the proud one, his soul is not right within him; but the righteous will live by his faith.* Faith is trusting God in all things (not just trusting God for good things) especially when hope is deferred and when we are living with disappointment.

2. HOPE BEGUN: Habakkuk 3:2 *Lord, I have heard the report about You and I fear. O LORD, revive Your work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years, make it known; in wrath remember mercy.*

There is a point where hope begins its restoration. When we see God in the midst of trouble or disappointment, then our hope begins the restoration path. Something is born in the prophet's heart and asks God to revive and restore as He always did, knowing that because he knows God's character, His mercy, His loving-kindness, and His everlasting love.

Verse 3 *In wrath remember mercy...think of it this way...Lord, in the discipline that I am now under, remember mercy. In the trouble that I am now experiencing, remember mercy. In the confusion that I'm living in, remember mercy. In the doubt that I am now having, remember mercy. In times of crushing loss, Lord, remember mercy. Lord, in times of sin, remember mercy. When we trust that God is doing something in our days of trouble and disappointment, then faith begins to rise. This is the place that a decision needs to be made – a decision to trust in our God of mercy!*

Would you rather have a helicopter God? A God who hovers above all of our experiences and oversees every aspect of our life. A Tiger God? A harsh God who uses tactics of fear and shame and yet is so close because outside is not safe. A Lawnmower God? A God who prevents adversity, struggles or failure. Or do you want to know the God who never forsakes in the midst of trouble?

3. HOPE RESTORED: Habakkuk 3:16-19 *I heard and my inward parts trembled, at the sound my lips quivered. Decay enters my bones, and in my place I tremble. Because I must wait quietly for the day of distress, for the people to arise who will invade us. 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. The Lord GOD is my strength, and He has made my feet like hinds' feet, and makes me walk on my high places.*

The church of Jesus Christ can place their hope in the hands of our awesome God. Instead of asking God, "How long?" change our prayer to... Revive me Lord, restore us all and remember Your promise of mercy, kindness and everlasting life. My hope will be in You, Lord, and I will rejoice in You, the God of my salvation.

Hope is not something that just happens but something that we put our effort into by going to the Word and believing who God is. Invite Jesus into our troubled life and let Him come and restore our days...

Dear Lord Jesus, I believe You are the Son of God. I believe that on that cross You took my guilt, my sin, and my shame and You died for it. You faced hell for me, so I wouldn't have to. And You rose again to give me a place in Heaven, a purpose on Earth, and a relationship with Your Father. Today, Lord Jesus, I turn from my sins to be born again. And now, God is my father, Jesus is my Savior, The Holy Spirit is my helper. And Heaven is my home. Amen.

What are 2 foundations of hope?

What does "hope deferred" mean?

What trouble has gotten you down? What are you trying to solve on your own?

How does hope begin in your troubled area? How has God's mercy worked in your life?

Read Habakkuk and ask God to reveal great truths!!!