

HOPE IN THE LORD

33 Woe to you, O destroyer, you who were not destroyed! Woe to you, O treacherous one, but they did not deal treacherously with you! When you have finished destroying, you shall be destroyed. When you have stopped dealing treacherously, they will deal treacherously with you. ²O Jehovah, be gracious to us; we long for you. Be our strength every morning, and our salvation in the time of distress. ³At the thundering of your voice, the peoples flee; when you arise the nations scatter. ⁴Your plunder, [O nations,] shall be gathered like the young locusts gather [the crops]; men shall pounce upon it like locusts swarm [over the harvest]. ⁵Jehovah is exalted, for he dwells on high; he has filled Zion with justice and righteousness. ⁶There will be stability in your times; [he will provide] a wealth of salvation, wisdom and knowledge—the fear of Jehovah is your treasure. ⁷Listen! Their brave men cry out in the streets; the ambassadors [who seek] peace weep bitterly. ⁸The highways are deserted, no travelers are on the roads. The treaty has been broken, its witnesses are despised; he respects no one. ⁹The land mourns and wastes away; Lebanon is ashamed and withers; Sharon has become like a desert; and Bashan and Carmel have lost their foliage. ¹⁰Now will I arise, declares Jehovah. Now will I be exalted. Now will I be lifted up. ¹¹You have conceived chaff, you will give birth to stubble—your wrath is the fire that will consume you. ¹²The people will become like the residue of burnt lime; [they will be] like thorns that are cut down and burned in the fire.

¹³You who are far away, hear what I have done; and you who are near, acknowledge my power! ¹⁴The sinners in Zion are terrified; trembling grips the godless ones. [They ask,] Who among us can dwell with the consuming fire? Who among us can dwell with everlasting burning? ¹⁵He who walks in a righteous manner and who speaks what is right; he who rejects gain gotten by means of extortion and keeps his hand from accepting bribes; he who covers his ears so as not to hear about plots to shed blood and shuts his eyes so as to avoid looking at evil things. ¹⁶[This man] will dwell on the heights, his refuge will be the impregnable rocks; his bread will be provided [for him], and he will have a sure supply of water. ¹⁷Your eyes will see the King in his beauty; they will look upon a land that spreads out to great distances. ¹⁸[Then] your mind will muse on the [former] terror, wondering, Where is the one who collected the tribute money? Where is the one who weighed [the revenue]? Where is the officer in charge of the towers? ¹⁹You will no longer see those fierce people—[those] people who spoke an unintelligible speech that you could not comprehend, [who spoke] a foreign language that you could not understand. ²⁰Look upon Zion, the city of our [sacred] festivals. Your eyes will see Jerusalem [as being] a peaceful dwelling place, a tent that shall not be removed—its stakes will never be pulled up, nor will any of its cords be broken. ²¹But there Jehovah will be with us in his majesty. [It will be] a place of broad rivers and streams, along which no galley with oars will travel, neither shall any mighty warship sail [upon those rivers]. ²²Because Jehovah is our Judge, [because] Jehovah is our Lawgiver, [because] Jehovah is our King, he will save us. ²³Your rigging hangs loose! The mast is not held secure; the sail is not spread out. Then the prey of an abundant spoil was divided—the lame took the plunder! ²⁴The resident [of that city] will not say, I am sick. The people who reside there shall have their iniquity forgiven. (Isa. 33:1-24)

Introduction

What if the following were to happen to you? Andy Frahler came to work one morning only to discover that he had been fired. A long time friend and co-worker broke the news to Andy and informed him that he was taking over Andy's duties. There was no farewell party, no parting gift. Andy was merely told to clean out his desk and leave. (*POWER*, 11/28/82, pp.4-6)

How would you react if this were to happen to you? Would you react with shock? Outrage? Numbness? Disbelief? A sense of betrayal? A desire for revenge?

The Old Testament people of Judah experienced an even greater sense of betrayal and distress. In the midst of their distress they cried out to the LORD, appealing to the fact that they placed their hope in Him.

In the world we meet with betrayal and distress, but those who hope in the LORD shall not be disappointed.

I. Hope in the LORD, Because He will Render Justice (Isa. 33:1-6)

Verse 1 pronounces a word of woe against those who deal treacherously: *"Woe to you, O destroyer, you who were not destroyed."* Here was an unprovoked act of aggression. Have you ever suffered an unjustified attack on your character? Have you ever suffered an unjustified attack on your performance? Have you ever suffered an unjustified attack upon your own person? *"Woe to you, O treacherous one, but they did not deal treacherously with you."* Here was an unjustified betrayal of confidence and good faith. Have you ever confided in someone and had your confidence betrayed?

This passage of Isaiah is referring to the treaty that Judah had concluded with the Assyrians, recorded in 2 Kings 18:13-16,

In the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah's reign, Sennacherib king of Assyria attacked all the fortified cities of Judah and captured them. ¹⁴So Hezekiah king of Judah sent this message to the king of Assyria at Lachish, "I have offended [you]. Withdraw from me, and I will pay whatever you demand of me." The king of Assyria exacted from Hezekiah king of Judah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold. ¹⁵So Hezekiah gave him all the silver that was found in the temple of Jehovah and in the treasuries of the royal palace. ¹⁶At this time Hezekiah king of Judah stripped off the gold with which he had covered the doors and doorposts of the temple of Jehovah, and gave it to the king of Assyria. (2 Kgs. 18:13-16)

But now the Assyrians have broken the treaty, as 2 Kings 18:17a informs us, *"The king of Assyria sent his supreme commander, his chief officer and his field commander with a large army, from Lachish to King Hezekiah at Jerusalem."* The

only reason Sennacharib had concluded this treaty with Judah was because he was at war with Egypt at the time and he did not want to be caught between two foes: Judah to the north and Egypt to the south.

Verse 1b goes on to promise a day of justice: *“When you have finished destroying, you shall be destroyed. When you have stopped dealing treacherously, they will deal treacherously with you.”* When the act of treachery has run its course, then, in due time, there shall come a day of justice.

Isaiah, on behalf of the betrayed and invaded people of God, calls upon the LORD: *“O Jehovah, be gracious to us.”* Here is an appeal to the LORD’s promise recorded in Isaiah 30:18a, *“Jehovah longs to be gracious to you,”* and an appeal to His covenant faithfulness, as is seen by Isaiah’s use of the covenant name, *“Jehovah”* (or, *“LORD.”*) Then Isaiah continues, *“we long for you.”*

But the nation had not longed for the LORD, nor waited for Him, as we learn from Isaiah 30:15-16,

This is what the Lord Jehovah, the Holy One of Israel, says, “Your salvation is found in repentance and rest, your strength [is found] in quietness and confidence; but you will not [accept this]. ¹⁶You said, ‘No! [On the contrary,] we will flee on horses!’ Therefore you will flee. And [you said], ‘We will ride away on swift horses!’ Therefore those who pursue you will be swift.” (Isa. 30:15-16)

Apparently Isaiah is referring to a small remnant who did, in fact, wait for the LORD, as we learn from Isaiah 8:17, *“I will wait for Jehovah, who is hiding his face from the house of Jacob; I will look to him”*—and for their sake the LORD now spares His people. In a far greater way, by the faithfulness of the one man, Jesus Christ, the people of God are saved, note Hebrews 3:1-2a, *“Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, focus your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess. ²He was faithful to the one who appointed him.”*

Isaiah’s prayer to the LORD continues: *“Be our strength every morning, and our salvation in the time of distress.”* Isaiah requests the LORD to be the constant Defender and Preserver of His people, an ever-present source of strength, support and defense. He is asking especially that the LORD would rise up to sustain and save His people in their hour of trial and distress—a prayer in keeping with the testimony of the Psalmist: *“God is our Refuge and Strength, a very present help in trouble”* (Psl. 46:1.)

Verses 3-4 proclaims Isaiah’s confident a word of assurance: *“At the thundering of your voice, the peoples flee; when you arise the nations scatter. ⁴Your plunder, [O nations,] shall be gathered like the young locusts gather [the crops]; men shall pounce upon it like locusts swarm [over the harvest].”* Isaiah is confident that the

LORD will arise to rout the enemies of His people (vs. 3.) Addressing the enemy, Isaiah declares that the people of the LORD will gather their spoils (vs. 4.)

Verse 5 contains a statement of praise to the LORD for coming to the defense of His people: *"Jehovah is exalted; for he dwells on high."* The redemption of His people and the defeat of their foes demonstrate that the LORD is exalted and cause His people to acknowledge this glorious fact with a hymn of praise. The reason the LORD is exalted is to be found in the fact that He *"dwells on high;"* He is majestic and sovereign, He alone is God, and as such He alone is able to perform the works that none other can. Isaiah goes on to declare, *"he has filled Zion with justice and righteousness."* Oppression and treachery (vs. 1) have been confronted and conquered by justice and righteousness; and now the LORD proceeds to cause that justice and righteousness to fill the whole land.

Let us hope in the LORD, especially at those times when we have suffered unjust attack, because He will render justice:

God is just, He will pay back affliction to those who afflict you ⁷and give relief to you who are afflicted, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. (2 Thess. 1:6-7)

II. Hope in the LORD, Because He will Act at the Critical Moment (Isa. 33:7-12)

Verse 7 describes a scene of despair: *"Listen! Their brave men cry out in the streets; the ambassadors [who seek] peace weep bitterly."* The valiant soldiers cry out in terror, while the ambassadors weep in bitter disappointment. Can you identify with that sense of despair? Do you find yourself helpless and terrified by what you must face tomorrow? Do you find that all your plans and contingency measures have failed? Do you find yourself in a state of panic and despair, such as were the people of Judah?

Verse 8 describes a nation under the control of the enemy armies: *"The highways are deserted; no travelers are on the roads. The treaty has been broken, its witnesses are despised; he respects no one."* *"The highways are deserted"*—no one dares to venture out, no one can get through to solicit help from Egypt. The enemy has violated the treaty, he shows no respect for honor, integrity or principle. Do you find yourself controlled by the enemy? Do you feel trapped and cut off from every source of help? Do you find yourself dealing with people and powers that have no respect for honor, integrity, or principle? Verse 9 describes a land that is being devastated by the enemy: the splendor of Lebanon and the beauty of Sharon are reduced to a wilderness by the armies of Assyria.

It is precisely at this time that the LORD announces it is time when He will act: *"'Now will I arise,' declares Jehovah. 'Now will I be exalted. Now will I be lifted up'"* (vs. 10.) The LORD has been watching and waiting, and now the time for divine action and intervention has come. Addressing the enemy, the LORD declares that

his plans shall be thoroughly nullified and result in their own destruction: "*You have conceived chaff, you will give birth to stubble—your wrath is the fire that will consume you*" (vs. 11.) The people who set themselves against the LORD and against His people shall become like thorns that are cut down and burned in the fire (vs. 12.)

Let us hope in the LORD, especially at those times when we find ourselves overwhelmed by our spiritual foes and all seems lost, because the LORD will act at the crucial moment:

We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about the hardships we suffered in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life. ⁹Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened so that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. ¹⁰He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us. (2 Cor. 1:8-10); such is the testimony of the Apostle Paul

... after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will personally restore you, support you, strengthen you, and establish you. ¹¹To him belongs the dominion forever. Amen. (1 Pet. 5:10-11)

III. Hope in the LORD, Because He will Bring You into His Blessed Kingdom (Isa. 33:17-24)

Verse 17a presents the promise that the people of God "*shall see the King in his beauty.*" Historically, King Hezekiah was exalted,

So Jehovah saved Hezekiah and the people of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib king of Assyria and from the hand of all others. He took care of them on every side. ²³Many brought offerings to Jerusalem for Jehovah and valuable gifts for Hezekiah king of Judah. From then on he was highly regarded by all the nations. (2 Chron. 32:22-23)

Ultimately, we shall see the Lord Jesus Christ return in power and great glory. On the day He comes, the Lord Jesus shall be "*glorified in his holy people and ... be marveled at by all those who have believed*" (2 Thess. 1:10.) Verse 17b presents the promise that the people of God "*will look upon a land that spreads out to great distances.*" Here is a land free from the constraining presence of enemies and threats of terror, a broad land open wide to the redeemed—here is the description of the whole earth becoming the kingdom of God and the peaceful possession of His people. Verses 18-19 present the promise that the people of God "*will muse on the [former] terror*" and "*will no longer see those fierce people.*" In the eternal kingdom of God the present terrors that threaten body and soul shall be looked upon as nothing more than a quaint memory.

Verse 20 presents the promise that the people of God *“will see Jerusalem [as being] a peaceful dwelling place.”* Here is the description of the perfect peace and undisturbed tranquility that characterizes the kingdom of heaven, note Revelation 7:17, *“the Lamb who is at the center of the throne shall be their shepherd; he will guide them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”*

There amidst this scene of tranquility, beauty and abundance, the LORD Himself will be with us in majesty (vs. 21.) The peace and tranquility of this existence is the result of God’s people acknowledging the LORD to be our supreme and rightful Lord and King (vs. 22)—where there is submission to the LORD’s righteous rule there is the assurance of the LORD’s protection and blessing. In verse 23 this condition of blessed tranquility is graphically portrayed by the image of the enemy warships being dismantled and rendered useless, while **the lame** among God’s people take the spoil. Verse 24 now makes clear that the mention of the lame is only used figuratively to show the utter helplessness of the enemy (God has rendered them so impotent that even the lame can exploit them.) Verse 24 declares that there shall not be found any sickness or malady among the LORD’s redeemed—every aspect of the divine curse will be excluded from the kingdom of God because *“the people who reside there shall have their iniquity forgiven.”*

Let us hope in the LORD, being assured that He shall bring us into His eternal kingdom with all of its divine blessings and His own immediate presence.

Conclusion

In a time of betrayal and distress, the Old Testament people of God cried out to the LORD. When they did, they found Him to be the faithful God: He not only came to their rescue, He also assured them that at the appointed time they would come to experience the fullness of His blessing.

Christian, place your hope in the LORD your God, especially at such times when you encounter betrayal and distress. Be assured that you, too, will find Him to be the faithful God who will come to your rescue, who will sustain you, and who is preparing a place for you in His blessed kingdom.