

Hope That Cannot Be Destroyed



SABBATH—NOVEMBER 10

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Job 38–41; Isaiah 41:8–14; Jeremiah 29:1–10; Habakkuk 1:1–4; Hebrews 12:1–13.

MEMORY VERSE: “And hope will never let us down. God has poured his love into our hearts. He did it through the Holy Spirit, whom he has given to us” (Romans 5:5, NIV).

WHEN WE ARE WITH SMILING PEOPLE IN CHURCH, how easy it is to talk and sing about hope. But when we find ourselves in the crucible,¹ hope does not always seem so easy. When we are in trouble, we often begin to question everything and the wisdom of God.

In one of his books, C. S. Lewis writes about a make-believe lion. A person wants to meet this lion. He asks if the lion is tame (safe). He is told that the lion is not tame, “but he’s [he is] good.”

We do not always understand God, and He seems to do unexpected (surprising) things. But that does not mean that God is against us. It just shows that we do not have the full picture yet. We struggle with the idea that if we have peace, confidence, and hope, God must do the things we expect of Him. We think that He needs to be “tame” or “safe.” If we do, we set ourselves up for disappointment.

THIS WEEK'S LESSON UP CLOSE: How does our understanding of the character of God² help us keep hope in the crucible?

1. crucible—a boiling pot for purifying metals. It also represents a testing time, a time of suffering, that strengthens character, or who we are.

2. character of God—who God is; understanding the character of God means being kind, loving, honest, and so on. God's law (Ten Commandments) show us His character.

SUNDAY—NOVEMBER 11**THE BIG PICTURE
(Habakkuk 2:2, 3)**

When we are hurting, it is very easy to think that what happens to us is very important to us. But there is a larger picture than just “me” (read Revelation 12:7; Romans 8:22).

What did Habakkuk complain about in Habakkuk 1:1–4?

You might expect that God would say something like “That is really terrible, Habakkuk. Let Me come and help you quickly.” But God’s answer is very different. He tells Habakkuk that things are going to get worse. Read this in Habakkuk 1:5–11.

Israel has been taken into captivity (slavery) by the Assyrians. But God promises that worse things are coming. The Babylonians will now carry away the people of Judah. Habakkuk cries out again in verses 12–17. Then he waits to see what God is going to say.

How does God’s promise to destroy Babylon in Habakkuk 2:2, 3 bring hope?

Habakkuk 2 is God’s promise that Babylon would be destroyed later. Hebrews 10:37 quotes Habakkuk 2:3, which hints at the promise of the Messiah’s coming in the future. The promise that Babylon would be

destroyed was certain. In the same way, the promise that “Babylon the Great” will be destroyed is also certain (Revelation 18:2, NIV).

Habakkuk was trapped between the great evil surrounding him and God’s promise of worse to come. But we also find ourselves in the same way in the history of salvation.³ Great evil is around us, but the Bible foretells that much worse is to come. The key to Habakkuk’s salvation was that God helped him to understand the whole picture. So, in chapter 3 Habakkuk prays a wonderful prayer of praise because of what God will do in the future.

What does Habakkuk list in Habakkuk 3:16–19 as his reasons for hope? What is the hope of God’s people as we wait for the last prophecies⁴ to be fulfilled?**MONDAY—NOVEMBER 12****WHO OUR FATHER IS
(Job 42:1–6)**

Oswald Chambers, a Christian writer, writes, “Have you been asking God what He is going to do? He will never tell you. God does not tell you what He is going to do. He shows you who He is.”—Adapted from *My Utmost for His Highest* (Uhrichville, Ohio: Barbour & Company, Inc., 1963), Jan. 2.

What do you think Chambers means by this idea?

3. salvation—God’s plan for saving sinners from eternal (without end) death.

4. prophecies—messages that tell what will happen in the future.

The book of Job begins with great personal happening and loss for Job. He loses everything, except his life and his wife. She suggests that he “‘curse God and die!’” (Job 2:9, NIV). Later in the book Job’s friends try to explain to him why all the bad things have happened to him. Throughout all of these discussions, God remains silent.

Then suddenly in Job 38 God appears and speaks: “‘Who do you think you are to disagree with my plans? You do not know what you are talking about’” (verse 2, NIV). Without stopping, God asks Job about 60 thoughtful questions. Open your Bible and read through these in Job 38 and Job 39.

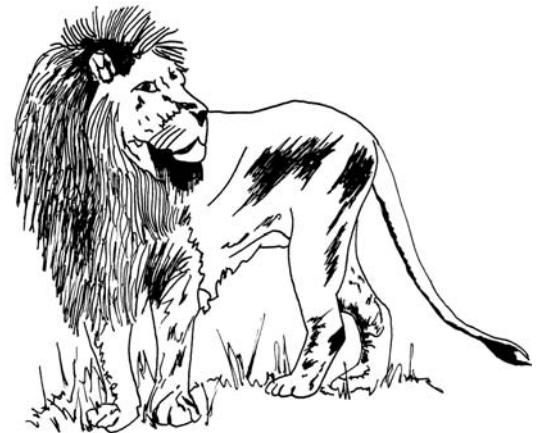
After the last question, Job answers, “ ‘I am unworthy. How can I reply to [answer] you? I’m [I am] putting my hand over my mouth. I’ll [I will] stop talking. I spoke once. But I really don’t [do not] have any answer. I spoke twice. But I won’t [will not] say anything else’ ” (Job 40:4, 5, NIV). But God is not finished. He then begins again and asks another set of “big” questions.

Read Job’s last answer in Job 42:1–6. What was God trying to tell Job? And how did it influence⁵ Job?

God never answers any of the “why” questions of Job’s friends. But God does paint a picture of His unlimited greatness as shown through the

wonderful works of creation. After this, Job certainly does not need any answers. Job was very impressed with the great show of God’s greatness and power.

This story shows an interesting puzzle. Hope and encouragement can come from understanding that we know so little. We like to find comfort by knowing everything, so we become discouraged when we cannot know. But sometimes God shows us our lack of knowledge to help us understand that human (concerning men, women, and children) hope can find safety only in a God much greater than ourselves.



God shows Job a picture of His greatness through His wonderful works of creation.

Are there now things that you just cannot understand? If so, focus on the character of God. How can doing that give you the hope that you need to go through things that you cannot understand?

5. influence—to have power, or an effect, over persons or things.

TUESDAY—NOVEMBER 13**OUR FATHER'S PRESENCE (BEING HERE) (Isaiah 41:13)**

Someone once said, "When God seems far away, who is the one who has moved?" When problems happen, we decide that God has left us. The truth is that He has not gone anywhere.

God's presence seemed very far away to the Jews who were slaves in Babylon. But through Isaiah God promises them that they will be freed. The Jews did not really return to Jerusalem until many years later. But God wanted His people to know that He had not moved away from them. He also wanted to tell them that there was every reason for hope.

What reasons for hope can you list in Isaiah 41:8–14 for people waiting eagerly to be taken home to heaven? How does this promise help us as we wait for our wandering on earth to end?

One of the most powerful pictures in these verses is found in verse 13. The ruler (God) of the universe⁶ says that His people do not need to fear. This is because He is the One who takes " 'hold of your right hand' " (NIV). It is one thing to think of God guiding (leading) events on earth from a big throne far away from our earth. But the picture becomes very

different when we understand that God is close enough to hold the hands of His dearly beloved people.



Isaiah says not to be afraid of trouble, because God takes " 'hold of your right hand' " (Isaiah 41:13, NIV).

When we are busy, we do not always remember that God is so close to us. But when we do remember that He is Emmanuel ("God with us"), it makes a big difference. When God is present (here) with us, His purposes, His promises, and His changing power are, too.

Over the next few days, try an experiment (test). Remind yourself often that the God of the universe is close enough to you to hold your hand and is personally promising you help. Keep a record of how this changes the way you live. Be prepared to discuss your experience in class on Sabbath.

6. universe—all the matter (things), light, and energy (forces in nature that do work) that have been discovered (found) or that we know of.

WEDNESDAY—NOVEMBER 14**OUR FATHER'S PLANS FOR US
(Jeremiah 29:1–10)**

Everyone is looking for hope. But from where is it found? For some people, hope is found in the smile of a friend. For others, hope grows from financial comfort or a strong marriage. Where do you look for hope and courage?

In the book of Jeremiah, the prophet (Jeremiah) is writing to people who had lost hope in their wandering on earth. “We were sitting by the rivers of Babylon. We cried when we remembered what happened to Zion” (Psalm 137:1, NlrV). The people are heart-broken, but Jeremiah lists reasons why they should not give up hope.



God's people were carried away to Babylon as slaves (Psalm 137:1). Jeremiah tells them not to lose hope in God.

What reasons for hope are given in Jeremiah 29:1–10?

In these verses, three important reasons for hope are listed.

First, God tells His people that they should not give up hope. This is because their situation is not the result of accident or evil. For God Himself says, “I forced [you] to go from Jerusalem to Babylon” (verse 4, NlrV). Evil seems to be all around, but Judah has never left the center of God's hands.

Second, God tells His people that they should not give up hope because He can work with them even in their hardships. “ ‘Also work for the success of the city I have sent you to. Pray to the Lord for that city. If it succeeds, you too will enjoy success’ ” (verse 7, NlrV).

Third, God tells His people that they should not give up hope because He is going to end their slavery in Babylon at a certain time. “The Lord says, ‘you will be forced to live in Babylonia for 70 years. After they [those years] are over, I will come to you. My gracious [merciful] promise to you will come true. I will bring you back home’ ” (verse 10, NlrV).

God explains how He was in charge of Israel's past, is in charge of their present, and will be in charge of their future. Then He beautifully shows His loving care for His people (read verses 11–14).

Read verses 11–14 and put your name after the word *you*, as though God were making these promises to you personally. Use these promises for yourself in your present troubles.

THURSDAY—NOVEMBER 15**OUR FATHER'S DISCIPLINE⁷
(Hebrews 12:5–13)**

What message to us is found in Hebrews 12:5–13? How does it fit in with what we have been studying this quarter?

In Hebrews 12:5–13, Paul describes trials and discipline. In the NIV Bible translation, the word *discipline* appears nearly ten times. In the Greek world, this word was the most basic word for “education.” So *discipline* means how God educates us in the school of faith. This is the education the author has just finished describing in Hebrews 11.



God educates us in the “school of faith.”

In all of Hebrews 11, Paul has been painting pictures of men and women of faith. Their faith helped them to keep going when they faced all kinds of troubles. In chapter 12, Paul then turns to us readers. He says that since so many people have succeeded against great odds, we also can run and finish the race of faith. The key is to focus upon Jesus (verse 2) when times are difficult (verse 3). Reading chapter 12 helps us to understand hardship. Without this, our understanding of hardship would not be clear. This chapter helps correct the misunderstanding of suffering that our culture⁸ gives us. Then we can understand clearly. And we can deal with trials better.

Read through Hebrews 12:1–13 and use verses 5–13 to answer the following questions: (1) Who gives discipline? (2) How do we deal with discipline? (3) What is the goal of discipline?

Make a list of all the reasons for hope found in Hebrews 12:1–13. How have you experienced this hope in your own times of spiritual learning?

FRIDAY—NOVEMBER 16

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Read Ellen G. White, “The School of the Hereafter,” pp. 301–309, in *Education*; “Help

7. discipline—training that makes you a stronger and better person.

8. culture—the ideas, skills, arts, tools, and way of life of a certain people at a certain time; civilization.

in Daily Living,” pp. 470, 471, in *The Ministry [Work] of Healing*.

“Into the experience of all people come times of disappointment, discouragement, and sorrow. It is then hard to believe that God is still the kind father of His earthborn children. This is true when troubles bother the soul and people prefer to die rather than to keep on living. It is then that many people lose their faith in God and become slaves to doubt and unbelief. If we would sometimes see with spiritual understanding the meaning of God’s leadings [disciplines], we should see angels trying to save us from ourselves. They work hard to put our feet upon a foundation⁹ stronger than the everlasting hills. Then new faith would spring into life.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Prophets*¹⁰ and *Kings*, p. 162.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

❶ Ellen G. White says that “all” of us experience times of “disappointment, discouragement, and sorrow.” How well do we notice one another as we go through such times? How can we better learn to be servants of hope for one another when we experience

such bitter disappointments?

❷ As a class, go over your answers to Tuesday’s last question. What difference did it make in your life as you continued to keep closeness to God?

❸ What does Job 38–41 tell us about God? What do you learn that gives you hope and encouragement? How does the Sabbath fit into this understanding? How does it help us remember the nature and character of God?

❹ Hope that causes positive change comes from heaven. This means that we can pray for hope to be brought into one another’s lives. Spend some time praying that one another’s weakening hope may be made new and strong. More than that, what can you do for others who struggle to hold on to hope?

❺ If someone is willing, ask that person to remember and share a time when trials caused him or her to lose hope and faith. What made that person better? What can we share with one another that can help when we are in times of doubt and hopelessness?

9. foundation—the basis on which an idea or belief rests.

10. prophets—men or women sent by God to warn us about what will happen in the future.