

Maintaining Hope

Key Verse: "It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD."
—***Lamentations 3:26***

Selected Scripture:
II Kings 25:1,2,5-7;
Lamentations 3:25-
33,55-58

ZEDEKIAH WAS THE LAST ruler of Judah. Following a siege of Jerusalem, he was taken captive by the Babylonian army while trying to flee the city. At Riblah, Nebuchadnezzar punished Zedekiah by having his two sons slain in his presence, after which his eyes were put out and he was taken as a prisoner to Babylon.—II Kings 25:1,2,5-7

As an eyewitness to the suffering and anguish that came upon Jerusalem when Judah went into Babylonian captivity, in the beginning portions of Lamentations, Jeremiah mourns the destruction of the city and its Temple as a consequence of God's chastisement upon wayward Israel. Nevertheless, the faithfulness of the Heavenly Father towards his repentant people offers hope to the afflicted.—Lam. 3:25

Implicit in the Key Verse is the thought that hope is necessary towards the strengthening of faith and, when accompanied by prayer, it affirms the expectation that God will in his own time and manner respond to such petitions. The act of quietly waiting, therefore, also implies an attitude of submission as opposed to being agitated or impatient that relief from one's circumstances is not occurring as quickly as desired.

The Heavenly Father may permit afflictions in order

to develop humility, rather than a haughty spirit. Affliction is merely for a season and is tempered by God's compassion, as he does not take pleasure in bringing pain or grief upon anyone.—vss. 26-33

In addition to his lament concerning what Israel suffered in captivity, Jeremiah recalls some extremely difficult experiences he had personally endured at the hands of those who opposed him because he had warned the people of Judah they would be punished for disobeying God. Ultimately, however, he received Divine assurances that he was heard in his hour of trouble.—vss. 55-58

Although the circumstances under consideration relate to Old Testament times, there are lessons that can be derived from the experiences of Jeremiah and Judah which are applicable to believers during this Gospel Age.

The nation of Israel suffered affliction because of its disobedience towards God. Jeremiah's sufferings were permitted as a test of his faithfulness as a prophet in God's service. Christians may be sorely tried along both of these lines today. On occasion, suffering may be caused by some physical or mental health condition that requires professional consultation and assistance. Troubles may also face Christians in other areas such as bereavement, job insecurities, family problems, rejection, dangerous living conditions, false accusations, and spiritual concerns.

Even in the midst of great difficulties, faithful believers who have devoted their lives to following the Master have scriptural assurance that the Heavenly Father will ultimately deliver them from their adversities if their faith and hope in God's promises are maintained.—Rom. 8:35,38,39

Those whose lives are activated by such promises have a magnificent hope and will be employed as kings and priests and, as the spiritual seed of Abraham, they will inherit the privilege of blessing all the families of the earth in God's kingdom.—Gen. 12:1-3; Gal. 3:27-29 ■