

A. DESPAIR INVADES

- The thesis Scripture for this series is Ps 27:13-14 NAS--*I would have despaired unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.*¹⁴ Wait for the LORD; be strong and let your heart take courage; yes, wait for the LORD.
- These verses suggest that there will be times when we are tempted to despair. Those times present us with an important choice: *Where will we place our hope?*
- King Jehoshaphat faced such a time late in his rule. This story provides 2 examples of hope when waiting on God in a desperate situation: 2 Kg 3:1-12 NLT--Ahab's son Joram began to rule over Israel in the eighteenth year of King Jehoshaphat's reign in Judah. He reigned in Samaria twelve years.² He did what was evil in the LORD's sight, but not to the same extent as his father and mother. He at least tore down the sacred pillar of Baal that his father had set up.³ Nevertheless, he continued in the sins that Jeroboam son of Nebat had committed and led the people of Israel to commit.
⁴ King Mesha of Moab was a sheep breeder. He used to pay the king of Israel an annual tribute of 100,000 lambs and the wool of 100,000 rams.⁵ But after Ahab's death, the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel.⁶ So King Joram promptly mustered the army of Israel and marched from Samaria.⁷ On the way, he sent this message to King Jehoshaphat of Judah: "The king of Moab has rebelled against me. Will you join me in battle against him?" And Jehoshaphat replied, "Why, of course! You and I are as one. My troops are your troops, and my horses are your horses."⁸ Then Jehoshaphat asked, "What route will we take?" "We will attack from the wilderness of Edom," Joram replied.
⁹ The king of Edom and his troops joined them, and all three armies traveled along a roundabout route through the wilderness for seven days. But there was no water for the men or their animals.
¹⁰ "What should we do?" the king of Israel cried out. "The LORD has brought the three of us here to let the king of Moab defeat us."¹¹ But King Jehoshaphat of Judah asked, "Is there no prophet of the LORD with us? If there is, we can ask the LORD what to do through him." One of King Joram's officers replied, "Elisha son of Shaphat is here. He used to be Elijah's personal assistant."¹² Jehoshaphat said, "Yes, the LORD speaks through him." So the king of Israel, King Jehoshaphat of Judah, and the king of Edom went to consult with Elisha.
- To summarize, evil King Ahab of Israel had just died and was succeeded by his son Joram. Moab saw this as an opportunity to quit paying taxes to the Israelites. (vv. 1-5)
- Joram sought military help from King Jehoshaphat of Judah and an unnamed king in Edom. They marched toward the wilderness of Edom to launch their attack. (vv. 6-9)
- The temptation to despair came after these armies had traveled for 7 days. They found themselves without water for the troops and the animals. (v. 9)
- Their desperation was real. Water is absolutely necessary to sustain life and there was no apparent solution. They couldn't go backward, nor could they go forward.
- LISTENING EXERCISE:

Can you relate to the sense of desperation that these men must have felt?

Have you ever experienced or are you currently experiencing a situation where there seems to be no apparent solution?

Can you get in touch with your thoughts and feelings in that desperate place? Be honest!

B. HOPE DISPLAYED

- When we are tempted to despair and waiting for answers, we must remember that only God provides us with solid rock hope (though our feelings may say otherwise):
 - Joram placed his hope in his circumstances and in his own opinion. He blamed God and judged Him as having an intent to harm them. (v. 10)
 - Jehoshaphat chose to place his hope in God and His Word. (vv. 11-12)
- Hope is a near relative of waiting in the Scripture: Rom 8:24b-25 NLT-- If we already have something, we don't need to hope for it. But if we look forward to something we don't yet have, we must wait patiently and confidently.
- Biblical hope is not wishful thinking, but its definition is "to wait for God with confidence; to have an expectation of good." (Strong's G1679)
- True hope seeks out spiritual solutions for the earthly circumstances in front of us: Ps 130:5-- I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in His word I do hope.
- "When our hope is powered by a promise that God has made, we are invited to hope in a new way. Putting it all out there, with full trust and confidence that the best possible answer to all my longings has been guaranteed by the Lord. Jesus is my Living Hope, the Hope that won't ever be disappointed, the Hope that overrides all the other hopes." (Tracey Tiernan)
- Fear of disappointment or a history of being disappointed makes hoping in God and trusting in His goodness more difficult. But God's perfect faithfulness is our hope:
 - Num 23:19 NLT-- God is not a man, so he does not lie. He is not human, so he does not change his mind. Has he ever spoken and failed to act? Has he ever promised and not carried it through?
 - Hab 2:3 -- For the vision *is* yet for an appointed time; but at the end it will speak, and it will not lie. Though it tarries, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.
- LISTENING EXERCISE:
Lord, search our hearts and show us what's inside:
 - 1) *True biblical hope that waits on and expects Your goodness, or*
 - 2) *Hope in something else (circumstances, people, wants, desires, etc.)*

If our hope is in anything less than Christ alone, please reveal any disappointment that may be contributing:

We pray, O Comforter, come and minister to any disappointment that we may have kept inside. Help us grieve any hurt or losses and turn to you bind up our broken hearts. Restore our hope in God and God alone.

C. PROMISE MADE

- Jehoshaphat convinced everyone to seek God's counsel. Let's be people who choose to hope in God and surround ourselves with those that do, too. (vv. 11-15)
- The Holy Spirit empowered Elisha to bring hope to the kings and their armies through His promise: 2 Kings 3:16-18--He said, "Thus says the LORD: 'Make this valley full of ditches.' ¹⁷ For thus says the LORD: 'You shall not see wind, nor shall you see rain; yet that valley shall be filled with water, so that you, your cattle, and your animals may drink.' ¹⁸ And this is a simple matter in the sight of the LORD; He will also deliver the Moabites into your hand.
- God's solution to this desperate situation made no sense! He told them that if they would dig lots of ditches then He would fill them with water from an unseen source.
- The Lord often doesn't reveal the way He will work or when, but He wants us to be ready, expectant, exercising our faith and hoping in His Word.
- Times of desperation provide God with the opportunity to test what's in our hearts. If they had dismissed this promise and failed to prepare, they would have missed out.
- Despite their desperate situation, these thirsty men dug ditches at God's command. The number of the ditches corresponded to the amount of hope and faith they had.
- LISTENING EXERCISE:
Lord, show us in every situation where we are waiting on You:
a) *Promises that You have given us:*

b) *Anywhere that we may have written off Your Word due to despair, disappointment or unbelief:*

c) *Any act of faith or any preparation that You want us to do. Show us how to express our hope in You and to ready ourselves for Your promise:*

We pray that You'd help us look to Your Word and Your Spirit to raise our hopes and expectations. Restore our confidence so that we will see Your goodness.

- God promised to pour out an abundance of water to them (and He did!) and also to us. Water represents the Word and the Spirit in Scripture. (2 Kg 3:20, Eph 5:26, John 7:37-39)
- When we find ourselves tempted to despair, let us lay aside any lesser hopes, choose to wait on God, listen for His Word and prepare the way for His goodness: Eph 1:3 NIV--Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

