



FINDING HOPE IN DARK TIMES

Have you ever looked at the world around you and thought, « This is too much. Evil seems to be winning and justice seems to have been lost » ? You're not alone. If you've found yourself grappling with fear, frustration or despair, you're in good company: the Old Testament prophet Habakkuk also cried out to God when he was overwhelmed by the chaos and injustice of his time.

Habakkuk 1 :2-4 : *“Violence is everywhere ! ... I am surrounded by people who love to argue and fight. The law has become paralyzed, and there is no justice...”* Sound familiar ?

Dark times are inevitable. Everybody goes through them and it is likely that you are in one, or just came out of one or will be heading into one at some point in the future, whether it is due to family trouble, health issues, financial pressure, business difficulties, political issues or opposition within your community. The list is endless, therefore, it is essential to respond in the right way.

Dark times have the potential to either destroy or develop us. Have you ever noticed how people respond differently to difficult situations ? Some grow stronger and become better, while others are defeated or even destroyed by the experience and become embittered. The choice is ours.

Living close to God and getting to know Him is crucial as well as trusting in His love for us personally.

The Apostle Paul demonstrated this as he experienced more hardships than any of us could claim to have endured: he was imprisoned on numerous occasions, severely flogged, beaten with rods and stoned. Yet he refers to these terrible times as 'light afflictions'. Why ? Because, through walking closely with God, he had come to know Him better and had built up trust in Him.

The same can happen to you. If you keep your mind focused on God in dark times, He will keep you in perfect peace, no matter what pressures you face.

Remembering how God has always taken care of you and helped you out of difficult situations in the past, and thanking Him for all the good things in your life right now, will stop you from being overwhelmed by outside pressures. This attitude is indeed crucial.

Let's go back to the book of Habakuk, a book filled with sad news and doom. And yet, at the very end of that book, this prophet came up with one of the most powerful statements of praise in negative circumstances:

« Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior. » (Habakuk 3 :17-18)

« Even though it seems like nothing is working for me, yet I will rejoice in the Lord. » The Book of Habakkuk does not end in fear, but in faith. This is because Habakkuk came to know God and found strength in Him.

Here on earth, everything is uncertain, but God is steadfast and unshakable. Like Habakkuk, we too can choose to rejoice by relying on God, because He loves us and is faithful.

We don't have to let problems overwhelm us or let discouraging feelings dominate us. Our response to these pressures depends on our perspective : are we God-centred or trouble-centred?