

CHRISTIAN LIVING SERIES

VICTORY OVER DESPAIR



by Robert Hooley

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The message contained in this booklet was delivered to an audience by Robert Hooley. It has now been made available to you in printed form in order to share the truth of God's Word with hungry hearts everywhere.

INTRODUCTION

One of the most discouraging experiences which can take place in the life of a human being is despair. Simply defined, despair means the utter loss of hope.

Few of us, if any, will live our total life without sometime coming face to face with this almost insurmountable problem of despair.

Recently, I have been impressed greatly with the need of ministry and enlightenment on this subject. The following message is the result, and is presented with a deep desire to encourage and help anyone who needs to win the victory over despair.

VICTORY OVER DESPAIR

A PROBLEM

Recently within one 24-hour period, I was involved in several hours of difficult counseling with two different married couples. The manifold problems and resultant divisions in these marriages were very great, and it soon became clear to me that both these couples were gripped with an overwhelming sense of frustration. Their respective circumstances seemed so difficult, so insurmountable, that they were overcome by an utter loss of hope in saving their marriages.

I did my best that day to be a good listener and to show forth love and genuine concern. I prayed with both couples and shared Biblical truths applicable to their situations, but the results were less than encouraging. There were no visible signs of a breakthrough at that time.

I will not soon forget what happened to me personally during the next few days which followed. The concern and burden that I felt for both these couples began to grow very deep and to weigh heavily upon my heart. It was an awesome feeling — especially so in the case of one of these couples, for their particular situation seemed utterly hopeless. I couldn't visualize anything but heartache and defeat for them. This negative projection could only lead to separation and eventual divorce, and this hurt.

I loved these people, and in feeling their frustration and loss of hope, I was brought to my knees in prayer. I diligently sought the Lord's help, requesting that He give me understanding and wisdom. I wanted some special key that would unlock their problem, some key that would lead to deliverance and a joyful restoration. I know that God answered that prayer in an amazing and fruitful way. In His wisdom and with perfect timing, He then led me into a valley experience relating to my own ministry. Looking back now, I call it a firsthand experience with DESPAIR.

I now understand that what God then sovereignly permitted me to go through for several consecutive

days and nights was for the purpose of helping me to help others. Through the specific experience that God set up for me (in no way connected with my own marriage), I became acutely aware of the agonizing feelings of despair. Mind-piercing thoughts of hopelessness and fiery darts of doubt attacked me. I was deluged with negative thoughts, and the sense of failure almost completely overwhelmed me. I was personally experiencing the same basic feelings as were those two couples who had come to me for help just a few days previous. In a very real way, I was face to face with despair, in combat with the very root problem that is universally producing agony and great unhappiness in the lives of millions of human beings. I personally learned of the powerful negative force that despair becomes in our lives if not properly dealt with.

Through this experience, God gave me the key of understanding for which I had prayed, and it proved most helpful in ministering to the two married couples who were then in the depths of despair. Often, the truths we learn best are those we personally experience. God frequently uses such means to create in our hearts a greater compassion, love and concern for the needs, weaknesses and infirmities of others. I'm sure that God, to some degree, leads all His servants through this pathway.

The pattern of learning by experience is beautifully depicted in the life of Jesus Christ. The Bible tells us in Hebrews 5:8 that Jesus learned obedience by the things which He suffered. Also, Hebrews 4:15 states that Jesus, the Son of God, can be touched by the feelings of our infirmities. Isn't it exciting and wonderful to know that Jesus Christ is ever available and willing to be touched by (identified with) our own personal weaknesses and feelings of frustration? He is our Faithful Friend, our Great High Priest at God's right hand, who ever lives to hear us and to make intercession for our needs. Let us rejoice and be thankful that the Son of God was manifested in the flesh. He fully knows and understands by actual experience what we humans face here upon this earth.

Also, the Prophet Ezekiel personally experienced all the heartache, discouragement and despair of the Babylonian captivity, right along with his own Jewish

people. He became so identified and burdened with their woeful circumstances that he proclaimed in Ezekiel 3:15, “. . .and I sat where they sat. . .” Here is an example of a man who not only loved God, but utterly gave of himself in love, deep concern and intercession for his own nation. It is little wonder that God used him in such a marvelous way.

One of the many wonderful things about being a servant of the Lord is that He always provides us with the tools and truths necessary to effectively fulfill our ministries. However, His methods are unpredictable and often different from the way we would choose. Isaiah 55:8-9 says that His thoughts and His ways are higher than our thoughts and our ways. I know that when God gave me the key of understanding about the problem of despair, He imparted that very important lesson in such a way that I shall never forget the teaching. Praise the Lord!

I believe it is essential that we approach this very important subject of despair in the light of its relationship to the great conflict being waged between God and Satan over the life of every human being. God wants all men to be saved and to experience salvation through His Son Jesus Christ (I Timothy 2:4-5) and then live an abundant and victorious life. In John 10:10, we read that Jesus came to give us life, even this abundant life, but that the devil, God’s arch-enemy, comes to steal, kill and destroy our lives. But, praise God, we are told in I John 3:8, that Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil, and that includes despair.

God doesn’t want this weapon of Satan to prevail over the lives of His people. We need to better understand despair and realize that behind its destructive influence lies the entire kingdom of darkness, led by Satan. It is only then that through our God we can overcome. We are encouraged by James 4:7, which says, “*Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*” The Prophet Isaiah also declares in Isaiah 54:17, “*No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. . .*” Although despair constitutes a powerful Satanic weapon against us, it can be dealt with.

The next chapter will present a Biblical illustration of despair as it happened in the life of a great man of the Old Testament — David. It will help us identify and understand this subject better, hopefully enabling us to successfully deal with this problem in our own lives as well as providing help for others.

UNDERSTANDING DESPAIR

“And David said in his heart, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul: there is nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape into the land of the Philistines; and Saul shall despair of me, to seek me any more in any coast of Israel: so shall I escape out of his hand.” (I Samuel 27:1) This verse is the beginning of a Biblical account about an outstanding man, David, in his battle against despair. The fact that he said in his heart, *“I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul”* reveals his deep feeling of being utterly without hope — in despair.

King Saul’s bitter and relentless pursuit of David had finally so discouraged David that he felt he must flee from his homeland in order to save his life. Similarly, most of us at sometime in our lives have probably encountered a very difficult and seemingly impossible situation, one which caused such utter discouragement and loss of hope that we wanted to run from the problem, and perhaps did — it’s despair. Therefore, it shouldn’t be too difficult for us to identify with David in that which he experienced.

The total situation depicted by this verse of Scripture should give us tremendous insight and understanding as to what a powerful force despair can be in one’s life. After all, David was a tremendously brave and powerful man. Even as a young shepherd boy tending his father’s flocks, he refused to run from a lion and a bear; he stood his ground and slew them both (I Samuel 17:34-36). It was this same David who boldly faced the mighty Philistine giant, Goliath, and defeated him single-handedly, giving his country a great victory (I Samuel 17:48-52). As a soldier in King Saul’s army, David’s dedication to God and country surpassed that of every other man, and he became Israel’s greatest warrior and military leader. The people sang of him, *“...Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands.”* (I Samuel 18:7)

Now, if despair could effectively take hold of such a courageous man as David, shouldn’t we give serious thought to its possible effect in our own lives? Right now, great numbers of married couples are seeing their relationship destroyed through despair. Feeling utterly

without hope, they often succumb to the temptation to leave it all behind — to run from it. This is just one area where despair is engaged in its diabolical work. The same pattern of destruction can be readily seen in numerous other situations of life. One of the most serious is where men and women who are called of God withdraw in defeat and despair, running from their ministries and responsibilities.

I believe that as we continue with the Biblical account of David's battle with despair, we will begin to clearly see the typical course of action or pattern of events which regularly accompany despair in its destructive work against our lives. It is in this Scriptural account of David's battle against despair where we see that David yielded to his feeling of hopelessness and did, indeed, flee from the problems encountered in his homeland of Israel. He fled directly to the land of the Philistines, the enemies of Israel, knowing that King Saul would never follow him there. I Samuel 27:2-3 tells us, *"(2) And David arose, and he passed over with the six hundred men that were with him unto Achish, the son of Maach, king of Gath. (3) And David dwelt with Achish at Gath, he and his men, every man with his household, even David with his two wives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the Carmelitess, Nabal's wife."*

In a study such as this, we often find enlightening significance and relevance in the meanings of Biblical names. For example, a root meaning of the word "Philistine" is "to migrate or to run." This is exactly what David did in his battle with despair, and we find that this is a typical pattern of action. It makes no difference whether it involves a marriage problem, a calling to the ministry, or some other situation — despair influences a person to run, to leave it all behind. Are you now retreating from any difficult situation in your life? Are you accepting defeat in the face of some difficult circumstance? Is there the temptation to withdraw and run from some problem, and not boldly face it and win the victory? If so, the chances are that you're struggling with a very powerful enemy — despair.

We are told that the Philistine city to which David fled was called Gath. The word "Gath" means "wine-

press,” which is very descriptive of the process which begins to take place in people’s lives when, due to despair, they withdraw in defeat from a difficult circumstance. Just as grapes pass through the winepress and the juice is squeezed out, those people who are under the influence of despair begin to have the very vitality of spiritual life pressed out of them. Also, when David fled to Gath, he took along his own family and six hundred men who served under him, plus their families. This, then, reveals another serious pattern we generally find linked with despair: it not only hurts us, but the lives of our loved ones too.

After David fled, the news got back to King Saul. I Samuel 27:4 says, *“And it was told Saul that David was fled to Gath: and he sought no more again for him.”* This was what David had hoped for. Now he was free from Saul’s pursuit, free from his hopeless situation, free from that terrible despair. Now he would be able to live a normal and happy life. Running had been the wise thing to do, or so it appeared, but running from a problem NEVER brings true deliverance. Yes, David experienced a temporary escape from the tremendous pressure he had been under, but something was certainly missing — let’s call it that deep abiding peace within, that freedom from guilt and condemnation. How true this has proven to be in our own lives, time and time again. When we wrongly retreat from any difficult circumstance in life, the best we ever get is just a temporary relief.

True deliverance and victory, evidenced by an inward abiding peace and freedom from guilt, doesn’t come this way. It’s little wonder that the Scriptures place repeated emphasis upon our need of overcoming. The Bible teaches that the overcoming nature of Christ is available to each of us, and this needs to be the pattern of our lives. In John 16:33, Jesus said, *“These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”* Through Him, then, we can have peace — we can victoriously overcome any difficult situation.

In I Samuel 27:3, we saw that David dwelt with or submitted himself to Achish, the Philistine king at Gath. The word “Achish” means “serpent charmer,”

and this certainly depicts the next phase of the pattern of events which accompany despair. Despair had not only caused David to run, but had now brought him to the place where his thinking and reasoning would begin to be adversely affected. Things started to change in David's life, and he wasn't the same man as before.

This is also happening in the lives of countless numbers of people today. Experience is our witness that when we have run from reality, something changes in our lives. We find it quite natural to try to justify our own actions, even twisting the truth to prove we didn't make a mistake. We think, "My actions won't put me in any danger! I won't get hurt or suffer any kind of loss!" This whole general pattern can be summarized by one word — DECEPTION.

I have seen this pattern of deception develop often, and it's amazing how quickly even God's people can be deceived in their reasoning. It's not too difficult to comprehend this happening to someone else, but it's not quite so easy to face up to it when we are personally deceived. It is important to realize that our adversary, Satan, is an adept deceiver, and he constantly tries to cleverly maneuver us into a circumstance where he can harm us. I Corinthians 10:12 declares, "*Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.*"

I want to reemphasize that David was not a weak man; he loved God and he wanted to serve God, but look at what despair caused him to do! It's an illusion for any of us, no matter how great our apparent strength or past accomplishments, to think that we can escape our hard problems or heavy responsibilities or difficult ministries by running from them — and not pay the price of being deceived to some degree by our constant adversary, Satan.

In this continuing drama involving David's battle against despair, we learn that he requested of King Achish a special town in which he and all those with him could live. I Samuel 27:5-6 tells us, "*And David said unto Achish, If I have now found grace in thine eyes, let them give me a place in some town in the country, that I may dwell there: for why should thy servant dwell in the royal city with thee? Then Achish*

gave him Ziklag that day: wherefore Ziklag pertaineth unto the kings of Judah unto this day."

We see that King Achish gave to David the town of Ziklag. The meaning attached to this name is very significant, for the word "Ziklag" means "winding or bending." Winding or bending is descriptive of an inconsistent walk with God, and that was exactly what David experienced during the sixteen months he dwelt in the country of the Philistines. Oh, sure, David still loved God; nevertheless, despair had caused him to run, and now deception and a very recognizable inconsistency of actions were gradually becoming the pattern of his life.

Despite these insidious changes, David was still able to fight. He and his men launched some devastating attacks against Israel's old enemies to the south, as in the former days, but he brought the spoil to King Achish in order to convince the Philistines that he had been battling Israel. We are told in I Samuel 27:8-12, "*And David and his men went up, and invaded the Geshurites, and the Gezrites, and the Amalekites: for those nations were of old the inhabitants of the land as thou goest to Shur, even unto the land of Egypt. And David smote the land, and left neither man nor woman alive, and took away the sheep, and the oxen, and the asses, and the camels, and the apparel, and returned, and came to Achish.*

"And Achish said, Whither have ye made a road to day? And David said, Against the south of Judah, and against the south of the Jerahmeelites, and against the south of the Kenites. And David saved neither man nor woman alive, to bring tidings to Gath, saying, Lest they should tell on us, saying, So did David, and so will be his manner all the while he dwelleth in the country of the Philistines. And Achish believed David, saying, He hath made his people Israel utterly to abhor him; therefore he shall be my servant for ever."

It is almost impossible for us to comprehend how, after raiding and killing Israel's old enemies in the South, as described in these verses, David could still volunteer to fight on the side of the Philistines against Israel, his own nation; yet, this is exactly what happened. I Samuel 29:1-2 says, "*Now the Philistines*

gathered together all their armies to Aphek: and the Israelites pitched by a fountain which is in Jezreel. And the lords of the Philistines passed on by hundreds, and by thousands: but David and his men passed on in the rereward (rear guard) with Achish." David was right there with the Philistine soldiers, preparing to fight against Israel.

We then read that the Philistine commanders resented the presence of David and his men — they did not want him around when the fighting started — and told King Achish so. Verse 4 says, *"And the princes of the Philistines were wroth with him; and the princes of the Philistines said unto him, Make this fellow return, that he may go again to his place which thou hast appointed him, and let him not go down with us to battle, lest in the battle he be an adversary to us: for wherewith should he reconcile himself unto his master? should it not be with the heads of these men?"*

King Achish, although favoring David's presence, then yielded to the will of the other Philistine leaders and sent David back to Ziklag, preventing him from fighting alongside the Philistines against Israel. Verses 6-11 tell us, *"Then Achish called David, and said unto him, Surely, as the Lord liveth, thou hast been upright, and thy going out and thy coming in with me in the host is good in my sight: for I have not found evil in thee since the day of thy coming unto me unto this day: nevertheless the lords favour thee not. Wherefore now return, and go in peace, that thou displease not the lords of the Philistines.*

"And David said unto Achish, But what have I done? and what hast thou found in thy servant so long as I have been with thee unto this day, that I may not go fight against the enemies of my lord the king? And Achish answered and said to David, I know that thou art good in my sight, as an angel of God: notwithstanding the princes of the Philistines have said, He shall not go up with us to the battle. Wherefore now rise up early in the morning with thy master's servants that are come with thee: and as soon as ye be up early in the morning, and have light, depart. So David and his men rose up early to depart in the morning, to return into the land of the Philistines. And the Philistines went up to Jezreel."

It is important for us to see that there is a deceptive and inconsistent pattern of action which develops in one's life through despair. However, behind this amazing set of circumstances connected with David's life was the presence of an everloving and merciful God who still had His sovereign hand on his life. We read in Psalm 37:23-24, *"The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand."* It is obvious that this is exactly what the faithful God of Israel was doing for David. It would have been too much had David actually fought alongside the Philistines, destroying his own brethren. David, in his deception, was willing to do so, but God, in His mercy, prevented it from happening. I'm thankful that our Lord likewise intercedes in the lives of His people today.

The next scene in this story is utterly heartbreaking, for I Samuel 30:1-6 tells us, *"And it came to pass, when David and his men were come to Ziklag on the third day, that the Amalekites had invaded the south, and Ziklag, and smitten Ziklag, and burned it with fire; and had taken the women captives, that were therein: they slew not any, either great or small, but carried them away, and went on their way. So David and his men came to the city, and, behold, it was burned with fire; and their wives, and their sons, and their daughters, were taken captives."*

"Then David and the people that were with him lifted up their voice and wept, until they had no more power to weep. And David's two wives were taken captives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the wife of Nabal the Carmelite. And David was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters. . ." This was such a heartbreaking experience for David and his men that they wept until they had no more strength left to cry. When we consider that these men were some of the most valiant warriors who ever lived, the depth of their despair must have been horrible.

David's personal grief also involved the loss of his two wives, Ahinoam and Abigail. It is significant that these two names mean "pleasantness" and "joy" — and

they seemed irretrievably lost to David. This whole picture is one of great loss and suffering, and it contains a relevant message for multiplied thousands of people who are today living under the influence of despair. We must see that there is a definite and easily recognized transitional pattern of actions which Satan is able to bring about in people's lives through despair. First, despair leads to loss of hope, and this causes one to retreat or run from difficulty. This in turn leads to deception and inconsistency of actions, which in time brings forth its fruit in the form of great loss and suffering.

This is more than just a story of a great man who lived during Old Testament times; we are dealing with the workings of despair, a principle which is adversely affecting the lives of great numbers of people today, and the end result is the same — loss of a ministry, loss of marriage partners, loved ones, possessions, pleasantness, joy. I'm so glad that the story of David's life doesn't end here. Something miraculous, something glorious and most heartwarming occurred, and we will read about it in our concluding chapter entitled "Winning the Victory."

WINNING THE VICTORY

In our study thus far, we have considered the typical course of action or pattern of events which regularly accompany despair, a powerful and destructive weapon of evil. We have now seen, by Scriptural illustration, the degrading effects it brings into one's life. I believe and trust that the Word of God we have shared thus far has enlightened our understanding of despair to the degree that we can readily detect any working of despair that might be in our lives today. We will now continue the Biblical account of David's battle with despair, leading to the exciting climax of total victory through God. But, even more exciting and important is the victory available to each of us if we apply these same overcoming principles to our own lives.

Our previous chapter concluded with the heart-breaking and pitiful scene facing David and his men when they returned to their city of Ziklag. The Amalekites had burned the city and had carried away their possessions, taking all their women and children captive. The insidious workings of despair had now brought David and his men to the point of ultimate loss and suffering, even destruction, for the men spoke of stoning David. To all appearance, David was a man who was utterly defeated — alone and in great despair.

Should I be privileged to speak with David in the life to come, I would be most interested to ask him about the amazing statement we next read in I Samuel 30:6 — ". . .but David encouraged himself in the Lord his God." How, under the circumstances, could he possibly find encouragement? What were his thoughts? All seemed so hopelessly lost — his possessions, his family, everything. Just what were his thoughts that brought encouragement?

Obviously, there was still a thread of life, a small spark, an element of courage and valor that remained deep in David's spirit — and it just wouldn't let him totally quit and give up. Here was a mighty man who had sincerely loved the God of Israel from the days of his youth. David had experienced many, many previous conflicts and very difficult circumstances in which God had always given him the victory, and that

remembrance was deeply imbedded in his heart. I'm sure that the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had been very closely watching over David throughout his battle with despair and had sovereignly permitted circumstances to run their course. However, true to His Word, He still loved David and was now extending to him a means of deliverance from the ever worsening clutches of despair.

This fact should be very encouraging to all of us, for in the hour of our great temptation, we also can expect to experience God's faithfulness in providing a way of deliverance. I Corinthians 10:13 says, "*There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.*"

Another encouraging Scripture is Deuteronomy 7:9, which says, "*Know therefore that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations.*" Also, Hebrews 13:8 says, "*Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever.*" We can also have our confidence in God strengthened by accepting the absolute truth of Romans 8:28, which tells us, "*. . .all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.*"

Yes, despair had carried David to the brink of total destruction, "*. . .but David encouraged himself in the Lord his God,*" as we previously read. David knew that he was left with only one hope, one way of escape that would work, one source of deliverance — faith in God. Now, again, what were David's thoughts at this crisis point in his experience with despair? Scripture doesn't give the answer, but perhaps he spoke encouraging words to his own soul, as he did in Psalm 42:5, saying, "*Why are thou cast down, O my soul? and why are thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance.*"

Often in the hour of greatest difficulty and crisis, a person quite naturally tends to think back to former

days of successful experiences, to circumstances of fond remembrance which build hope. Strength is even drawn from events in one's childhood and youth, things connected with the loving care and encouragements received from faithful parents and other loved ones. Perhaps David's thoughts went back to his childhood at Bethlehem — and how his father Jesse had often recounted the exciting stories of the lives of their ancestors. Any child would be stirred and intrigued with such a heritage. From the lips of Jesse, David probably had often heard the story of his eminent great-grandfather Boaz, a man of much faith and integrity, but there is one story which may have held a more prominent place in David's heart than any other — that of his great-grandmother Ruth.

It was an unforgettable story that started with the Bethlehem family of Elimelech and Naomi and their two sons, Mahlon and Chilion; who together left Bethlehem during a time of famine and journeyed east to live in Moab. David undoubtedly knew the story only too well — the sorrowful account of Elimelech's death, followed by that of Mahlon and Chilion. Naomi, brokenhearted from the loss of her husband and two sons, became filled with deep despair and utter loss of hope.

Such a great man as David, a tenderhearted person from his youth up, must have been encouraged when he recalled that his great-grandmother Ruth, a Moabite girl who had married one of Naomi's sons, overcame her personal grief from the loss of her own husband and steadfastly encouraged her brokenhearted mother-in-law. David could never forget Ruth's loving and encouraging words to Naomi, as recorded in Ruth 1:16-17, "*...for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me.*"

Surely, such unselfish and pure acts of love as these, especially in the life of one's own relative, could never be forgotten. David knew that Ruth accompanied her mother-in-law back to Bethlehem and faithfully encouraged and helped her to win the victory

over despair. Ruth was then, in turn, blessed of God in becoming the wife of David's great-grandfather, Boaz. This story is even more marvelous in our sight when we consider the fact that Ruth and Boaz, through their great-grandson David, became the direct ancestors of the Messiah of Israel and the Saviour of the world, Jesus Christ.

There are many elements of David's life which could have influenced his thoughts as he tried to recover from the despair of Ziklag. The important thing is that he took action — he encouraged himself in the Lord his God. The downward spiral due to despair stopped, and light began to spring forth in David's heart. I can almost hear him say, "Oh, God, forgive me! I can see what's happened, I can see what despair has done to me. If You raised up a lowly Moabite girl to help Naomi win her victory over despair, I know that You will help me too." In every difficulty there comes a time, if we really want victory, when we must make up our minds and say, "I'm retreating no more; I'm going to be an overcomer!" That moment had now come in David's battle with despair.

Now David was ready to receive God's help, and he requested the priest to bring forth the ephod, an emblem worn when approaching God for wisdom and direction. I Samuel 30:7-8 tells us, "*And David said to Abiathar the priest, Ahimelech's son, I pray thee, bring me hither the ephod. And Abiathar brought thither the ephod to David. And David enquired at the Lord, saying, Shall I pursue after this troop? shall I overtake them? And he answered him, Pursue: for thou shalt surely overtake them, and without fail recover all.*"

We see David coming to God and asking, "Shall I pursue after the Amalekites? — shall I overtake them?" Something precious and wonderful is reflected in these words: here was a man who wasn't too big to repent and acknowledge to God that he was to blame for the loss of his wives and possessions and for the great hurt brought to his friends. No wonder David was a man after God's own heart, for he could acknowledge the truth, then repent and do what was right; pride couldn't keep him from victory. David not only assumed his responsibility for the great loss, but he now

was proclaiming, "God, You can restore everything, You're a mighty God of restoration! Will You bless me and permit me to go after them?" This is a far different action than wanting to run. God must have been highly pleased with David that day, for He quickly responded, "*Pursue: for thou shalt surely overtake them, and without fail recover all.*"

Those words from God must surely excite and encourage all people who today, in their despair, have experienced great loss and suffering. God still says, "*For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye . . . are not consumed.*" (Malachi 3:6) A person can come to God today, no matter how bad his situation, and make all things right with Him. Then, he can ask in faith the same questions David asked — whether in relation to a crumbling ministry, a broken marriage, or some other loss — and our merciful God will encouragingly reply, "Pursue, and recover all!"

David wasted no time in reacting to God's words, for we read in I Samuel 30:9-10, "*So David went, he and the six hundred men that were with him, and came to the brook Besor, where those that were left behind stayed. But David pursued, he and four hundred men: for two hundred abode behind, which were so faint that they could not go over the brook Besor.*"

I Samuel 30:16-19 says that when David located his enemies, "*. . . they were spread abroad upon all the earth, eating and drinking, and dancing, because of all the great spoil that they had taken out of the land of the Philistines, and out of the land of Judah. And David smote them from the twilight even unto the evening of the next day: and there escaped not a man of them, save four hundred young men, which rode upon camels, and fled. And David recovered all that the Amalekites had carried away: and David rescued his two wives. And there was nothing lacking to them, neither small nor great, neither sons nor daughters, neither spoil, nor any thing that they had taken to them: David recovered all.*"

Despair is a very powerful weapon, and Satan effectively uses it against many of God's people today, just as with David of old. Even the Apostle Paul was not immune from its effects, for in II Corinthians

1:8 he spoke of how he even came to the point of despairing of life. However, Paul also had the victorious remedy, for he follows in Verse 9 by saying, "*But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead.*"

Countless thousands of people have known the deep and awesome depths of despair — the feeling of utter hopelessness, the compelling desire to run from it all, the overwhelming deception, the frustration and confusion, the intense suffering and great loss. Those who have experienced these terrible things realize that it is like being trapped in quicksand — the more you struggle, the worse it gets.

If you have ever tried to fight alone against the destructive workings of despair, you have undoubtedly discovered that it cannot be successfully done; your own ability and your own strength cannot overcome such a powerful thing as despair. The mighty David couldn't do it, the tenacious Apostle Paul couldn't do it, and you cannot do it — but God can. David had to encourage himself in the Lord his God, and Paul had to trust in God which raiseth the dead — there's no other way.

If we have received salvation, if we have been set free from the penalty of sin, if we have experienced the resurrection power of Jesus Christ in passing from death into life, if we have been raised up unto newness of life — all through faith in God — that same principle has to work in our battle with despair. We must have the sentence of death in ourselves, in our own carnal ways, in our own so-called strength and wisdom, our devices, our purposes — so that we should not trust in ourselves. We must die to self, then be raised from that death by trusting our God who raises the dead. This is what Paul did! This is what David did! This is what you must do!

Begin to encourage yourself in the Lord your God! Take the keys from the Word of God, as brought out in this book, and start to reverse the situation. Just as David, you can completely defeat the enemy and recover all, but you must do it God's way. Take action! Start by going to God right now with real repentance

in your heart, acknowledging to Him your part in the blame for whatever problems you face. He already knows it, but you must be willing to confess it. Search out the matter and humbly lay it before the Lord your God. As you turn completely to God for your deliverance, He will not fail. It's impossible!

Make this your own prayer: "Dear Heavenly Father, I thank You for disclosing through Your Word the workings of despair, and I also thank You for encouraging me and for revealing that there is a way of victory over my problems, despite their hopeless appearance. I can see what's happened, and I can see what despair has done to me. Right now, Father, I acknowledge my blame in the matter, and I confess my inability to solve the problems alone, in my own strength. I now turn it all over to You and ask for Your help, knowing that You are faithful to give it. Father, with Your help, I'm retreating no more; I'm going to be an overcomer. Bless me and permit me to pursue and to recover all, in Jesus' name. Amen."

We have other booklets printed by the same author, Robert Hooley, which are available to aid you in your Christian walk with the Lord. These are most helpful and may be obtained from Liberty Publications, 50 West 9th Avenue, Denver, Colorado 80204. They are, as follows:

SUCCESSFUL PRAYER

SUCCESSFUL FASTING

THESE SIGNS

PRIDE OF LIFE

