

“Finding Hope in the Darkness”

Text: Psalm 3:1-8 “<A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son.> LORD, how are they increased that trouble me! many are they that rise up against me. Many there be which say of my soul, There is no help for him in God. Selah. But thou, O LORD, art a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head. I cried unto the LORD with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill. Selah. I laid me down and slept; I awaked; for the LORD sustained me. I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set themselves against me round about. Arise, O LORD; save me, O my God: for thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek bone; thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly. Salvation belongeth unto the LORD: thy blessing is upon thy people. Selah.”

Purpose: The purpose of this psalm was to express to God the incredible pain felt during a time of betrayal, and the supernatural comfort and strength that the Psalmist had experienced through his trust in the Lord.

Proposition: God wants you to find your comfort and strength in him in your darkest days.

Interrogative: How can we do this?

Truth 1: We need to be honest about the human experience: 3:1-2 “<A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son.> LORD, how are they increased that trouble me! many are they that rise up against me. Many there be which say of my soul, There is no help for him in God. Selah.”

Reality 1: Christians can become depressed for seasons of life and in some cases be beset by bouts of depression over the course of their entire Christian experience:

- **The Case of David: A man who experienced chronic, intense bouts of depression: Psalm 42:3-6** “My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God?...Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance. O my God, my soul is cast down within me...”
- **The Case of Elijah: A man who despaired of life after his great victory on Mount Carmel: 1 Kings 19:1-4** “He himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers...”
- **The Case of Jonah: A man who questioned God’s justice Jonah 4:1-3** “But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry. ² And he prayed unto the LORD...O LORD, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live...”
- **The Case of Paul: A man who faced intense persecution in the ministry: 2 Corinthians 1:8-9** “We would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life: But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves...”
- **The Case of Charles Spurgeon: A man who faced physical infirmities and intense interpersonal conflicts:**

- **The Case of John Bunyan:** A man whose disposition seemed prone to introspection and melancholy thinking.
- **The Case of Martin Luther:** A man with a family history of intense depression.

Reality 2: The catalysts that stimulate depression are complex.

- **Potential physical causes:** What we eat and the amount of sleep we are having.
- **Potential physiological causes:** The way our bodies function particularly hormonally.
- **Potential dispositional causes:** Our personality type.
- **Potential chemical causes:** Certain medications or emotional responses to prolonged seasons of stress.
- **Potential spiritual causes to depression:** Satan can specifically target an individual for a season or during seasons of life.
- **Potential theological side to depression:** The way that we think about ourselves, God, and how we deal with sin.

Reality 3: Addressing depression medically is incomplete if the theological causes of depression are not corrected.

The Background:

- The circumstances that led to this Psalm
 - He sinned with Bathseba
 - He mishandled the abuse of one of his daughters in the palace
 - He mishandled Absalom
 - He felt a lack of confidence from within his inner-circle
- He felt that there were innumerable adversaries.
- He felt that there were many telling him that God would not help him.

Some practical dynamics being expressed

- David's **sin** was a major factor in this betrayal.
- David's **indecision** was a major factor the betrayal
- David's **fear of opportunists and bitter subjects** was weighing on his heart.
- David's **internal regrets** were weighing on his heart.
- David's **guilty conscience** was creating doubts.
- David's **discouraged friends** were stirring up doubts in his heart.

Some practical implications:

- **When we make poor choices, and mishandle situations, those lingering consequences will often haunt us.**
- **When we make enemies, they often lurk in the shadows waiting to take advantage of our vulnerability.**
- **When we have sinned, we often don't handle our sin Biblically:**
- **When we face the pressures of difficult circumstances, our thinking will often become clouded like David's.**

Truth 2: We need to focus on God's unchanging nature in the darkness: 3:3-4

“But thou, O LORD, art a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head. I cried unto the LORD with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill. Selah”...

David's response to His circumstances:

David chose to talk to himself:

- One part of David was being driven by his emotions and fears:
- The other part of David that was rooted in reality:

When we experience negative situations:

- **Natural Responses:** Our mind processes that situation:
 - Our emotions begin to dominate our inner man
 - We make bad choices which are guided by our emotions rather than truth which leads to a deeper descent into negative thinking:
 - Which descend into more negative emotions, and more bad choices
- **Biblical Responses:** Our minds process that situation
 - Our emotions begin to dominate our inner man:
 - BUT we choose to bring our thoughts under the authority of scripture. We purposefully focus our attention on what is true, rather than how we feel:
 - Corrected Biblical thinking by the power of the indwelling Spirit of God begins to lead my emotions, until my emotions and thoughts are brought to a healthy position

Psalm 42 and 43: “My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, where is thy God? When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me...”⁵Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance...¹¹Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God...⁵Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God...”

Four realities that David focused His mind upon:

- **Reality 1: God is his shield:** He actively protects David
- **Reality 2: God is his glory:** He was David's constant object of worship
- **Reality 3: God is his encourager:** He picked David's head up when he was weighed down and ready to give up
- **Reality 4: God is his advocate:** He listened to David's prayers and worked on His behalf in response to David's prayers

Truth 3: We need to establish a healthy course of action in the darkness: 3:5-8

“I laid me down and slept; I awaked; for the LORD sustained me. I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set themselves against me round about. Arise, O LORD; save me, O my God: for thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek bone; thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly. Salvation belongeth unto the LORD: thy blessing is upon thy people. Selah...”

David's Response:

- **Reflection:** He remembered the way God had taken care of him
- **Resolution:** He determined to think in the light of God's past care
- **Prayer:** He cried out to God in the midst of his struggle
- **Trust: He chose to trust God to work: Psalm 37:1-5** Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb. Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass.

Conclusion: Making it Practical when you are in a dark place:

- **Truth 1: Remind yourself that you are not the only Christian to experience these depths.**
- **Truth 2: Remind yourself that God has not left you alone even though you may feel that He has.**
- **Truth 3: Resist the temptation to let your emotions drive your thinking.**
- **Truth 4: Meditate on who God is, according to the scriptures.**
- **Truth 5: Remember how God has worked in you.**
- **Truth 6: Pour out your heart before Him in prayer.**
- **Truth 7: Trust in Him to carry you through the darkness back into the light.**