

When Darkness Comes

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Trial / Daniel 3

As we make our way through life, It's inevitable, bad things will sometimes happen. Sometimes it's because of our own wrong-doing, sometimes it's through no fault of our own

It doesn't matter how **old**, or **young**, **position in life**, how long you've been a Christian. All of us will go through darkness. It can come & go pretty quickly, or maybe last a long time.

Sometimes it's darkness on top of darkness; we're not through one adversity when another one comes our way

Darkness comes in a lot of ways.

- **Maybe it's because of our faith;** We need to expect that faith will sometimes bring darkness
- Jesus said to expect it - the Gospel will divide -it will put us at odds, even with the closest people to us; it's going to call for some major sacrifices
- a disciple is not above his teacher. Its only right to expect that the kinds of things that He dealt with, I'll have to deal with
- We might accept that intellectually, but that doesn't mean it's easy to deal with in the moment
- **A tragedy not necessarily related to my faith-** maybe it involves **death** of someone close; health crisis; crisis with a child or a spouse or parent; dark cloud from sin hanging

over our heads - maybe the sin of another person has brought darkness into our life -

When any of those things are going on, there are likely more questions than answers

- Some tragedies might be so **unthinkable** or seem so **unfair** we question God's existence or His goodness all together;
- If God does exist, or if God did care, why would He allow this to happen
- It's definitely not a secret, when bad things happen, they definitely **discourage** us, if not challenge our faith all together

That's why, When those kinds of things happen, we need some perspective that will get us through without throwing our faith away

- There are a # of places in the Bible that us that. This morning I've picked a story from Daniel 3 - the story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego

If you'll read with me 1-7 you'll immediately see their predicament

- **There's some back story here** - these men are Jews - Part of God's chosen people; the Jews had been rebellion for so long, God had given them over to the Babylonians; God would destroy all but a remnant of His people
- Based on what we know, I don't think these men are the one responsible for God's judgement - I assume they are innocent victims of other peoples rebellion;
- In some ways, that can make darkness worse. It's one

thing to suffer the consequences of my own wrong doing. It gets a little **tougher when our darkness is something out of our control**

- These are young men who've been taken away from home, under captivity of a foreign government. From chapter we we know they're going to be forced to learn the ways of Babylon - going to be molded and groomed into something they don't want to be
- When we get to chapter 3, for them, **this is darkness on top of darkness;**
- You're going to be forced to offer worship to to the king and to foreign gods, and if you don't, there's going to be an unimaginable death
- **Keep reading with me though verses 8-18**

God is still God

- **The first thing that needs to be remembered, darkness does not mean God is absent, or unaware, or unconcerned - those are the speculations that a person might be tempted to jump to, but that is just not true**
- I don't know everything to say about adversity; I know that sometimes adversity is a discipline from God
- Our reading from Hebrews 12.1-11; The writer is urging endurance when things are not easy; He makes reference to the **discipline of the Lord**; Sometimes God deals with us as sons, and in those moments, there's sorrow, it's not enjoyable, but the purpose is to bring about righteousness
- James writes about trials - if we view them the right way, they produce an endurance within us - Peter writes about

how they refine us

- The Bible not only acknowledges trials, but even suggests that some of them are from God himself

- **This is where the questions come rolling in** - How do i know if a trial is a discipline from God, or some coincidence that God chose not spare me from

- I don't know those answers, but i think we learn something valuable from these men; They knew for sure, that the bad stuff happening did not mean that God was unaware or unconcerned or lacked ability

- Maybe we take something from that; Even when we lack answers or have lots of uncertainty. God is still God

(2nd thing) We need to believe that God Can deliver

- **Sometimes we apply our limitations to God**; IOW, if in my mind, If i don't see how this is good, or can end well, or that there's daylight on the other side. If i don't see it, i just assume those things can't be true

- When we don't see a way through darkness, we're underestimating who God is;

- What we fail to remember is that God is working without limitations - no limit to his power, or has knowledge of what's best -

- We need the confidence of S, M, & A

(3rd thing) Still serve God even if He doesn't deliver

- Ultimately God will deliver us from all peril and difficulty

in eternity - only righteousness dwells something we all have our hope attached to -

- It's the **meantime** that we're thinking about - It might be we to deal with it for the rest of our life or at the very least we know this is not going away anytime soon.

- **from verse 16** - (he's giving them a 2nd chance) - **nothing to talk about here** - It doesn't matter what the earthly consequences are (18) , we will not turn our back on God
- to these men, even losing life itself was better than to go on living but having betrayed God

- **The hardest circumstances imaginable don't justify compromising faith**

- › **That's exactly what Satan is hoping for - That was his thought process in the story of Job**

- Satan thought Job only served God because God was so good to him and everything in life was perfect. His assumption was that if Job had to go through some real loss, adversity, he'd give up on God

- That his relationship with God is really just based on stuff.

- Job proves otherwise, but it's in that story we get that kind of insight;

- **Adversity is a foot in the door for Satan.** He's hoping that our relationship with God is so superficial and shallow that we'll only serve Him as long as keeps everything bad away

- In Job 2.10 ““You speak as a foolish woman speaks,” he told her. **“Should we accept only good from God and not adversity?”** Throughout all this Job did not sin in what he

said.”

- **A question we all have to wrestle with.** Am i only going to serve God when things are good, or am i willing to serve God even when the worst of things are happening
- That’s what makes building a strong faith now so important; You and I need to be building our faith in the calm, so when the darkness does come, we’re ready to stick it out with God even if that darkness lasts forever;

- **Last section - 19-30**

The support of others is crucial (not mentioned specifically in the story)

- it’s not hard to imagine that this was easier for them because they were going through this with others by their side -
- I can’t imagine a better time to realize the value of having lots of righteous people in your life
- Wether they’re going through the same thing at the same time or they are just their to walk with us
- People that can sit and listen, or give wise counsel, or pray, or encourage in some other way
- even people that can identify because they’ve been through what I’m going through
- **very likely you’re not going through a tragedy that is unique to you** - in all likelihood, someone sitting in this room today that has gone through the same thing you’re experiencing;
- Just like we need to be working on our faith, we need to

be working on our relationships

Show God to others

- I want to live everyday in a way that does that. I want to stand out; I want people to see that I live with a hope they might not have
- I don't know if there's ever a better opportunity to do that than when bad things happen
- That's certainly true in our story. If these 3 men easily walk away from their God, it leaves the impression He's not that important to you, or you don't really trust him; you don't think he can help, deliver.
- Because they don't do that, notice what he says (29) No other God is able to deliver in this way
- They were able to make a profound impression on others
- When others see us go through adversity and we don't let it turn life completely upside down, shatter our faith, diminish our hope, we're giving people an opportunity to see, there is a God in heaven worthy of our trust; One day He will bring all things to perfection for those that keep their faith in Him

Invitation

- For someone going through something really hard, you'll need more than just the few things that have been said this morning. This though, gives us all a foundation to move forward with when things go wrong in life
- Maybe you're dealing with a darkness you want help with - seek that - publicly or privately
- Maybe that darkness is attached to some sin in your life -

def need to be getting rid of that

- Or maybe you just don't have hope because God is not who you're really living for in life. You can come to Him right now and change all of that - commit to follow His will, baptized;