

SERMON OUTLINE

SERMON TITLE: The Discipline of Darkness

SERMON REFERENCE: Isaiah 50:3-4, 10-11

LWF SERMON NUMBER: #2206

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1) INTRODUCTION

- a) Sometimes we go through darkness, and we can't see the way ahead.
 - i) Sometimes nothing seems to make sense.
- b) When we are plunged into deep perplexity and despair, we often ask, "Why?"
 - i) Why has this thing happened?
- c) "Why?" is really not our question.
 - i) God has the answer to that.
- d) "How?" is the important question for us.
 - i) How are we going to react?
- e) We sometimes feel like we could bear up under almost anything if we just knew why.
 - i) But most of the time when we're suffering, it doesn't make sense.
- f) Isaiah 50:10-11
 - i) The people in this passage who are walking through dark times are those who are fearing God and obeying God's servants.
- g) Today's message will provide some insight on what we can do when the lights go out.

2) THOSE OF GREATEST DEVOTION MAY KNOW THE DEEPEST DARKNESS
(ISAIAH 50:10)

- a) Isaiah 50:10 is not talking about someone who has wandered away from God but about someone who fears the Lord.
 - i) "Fear" in this passage does not mean to cringe at the idea of God.
 - ii) Fear is love on its knees; it is a reverential awe for Almighty God.
 - iii) This is someone who has great respect and reverence for God and who obeys the voice of God's servant.
 - (1) When the Word of God is preached, he says, "Yes, Lord, I will obey You."
 - (2) And yet, he seems to walk in darkness.
- b) There is a distorted idea that if you become a Christian, it will be all joy, all light, all sweetness and roses all through life and that there will be no sickness or sorrow.
 - i) There are many saints who fear God and obey God who are walking in darkness.
 - (1) This was true of Bible saints.
 - (a) Job
 - (i) Job 1:1
 - (ii) Job 19:8
 - 1. God set darkness in the path of Job.
 - (b) Habakkuk
 - (i) Habakkuk 1:2
 - (ii) Habakkuk went to God for answers to things he couldn't understand.
 - (c) John the Baptist

- (i) Matthew 11:11
 - 1. John the Baptist was a great man, and yet, he experienced darkness and was deeply perplexed.
 - (ii) Matthew 11:3
 - (d) The Apostle Paul
 - (i) 2 Corinthians 4:8
 - 1. Paul knew that darkness need not put him in despair.
 - (2) In addition to Bible saints, the biographies and histories of other great saints speak of what we call “the dark night of the soul,” when they have gone through darkness and despair.
 - c) If you are plunged into darkness and things don’t make sense to you, that does not mean that you have sinned or that you’re out of the will of God.
 - d) Those of greatest devotion may know the deepest darkness.
- 3) THE FAITH THAT IS BORN IN THE LIGHT IS OFTEN DEVELOPED IN THE DARK
- a) We tend to grow more spiritually during times of darkness, difficulty, despair, heartache and tears than we do in times of sunlight and roses.
 - i) Faith is developed in the darkness.
 - (1) John Milton, who was blind, wrote one of the greatest books ever written, *Paradise Lost*.
 - (2) John Bunyan, who suffered and languished in prison, wrote *Pilgrim’s Progress* during a time of darkness.
 - (3) The Apostle John, exiled on the Island of Patmos for the testimony of Jesus Christ, wrote the book of the Revelation.
 - b) God wants to develop our faith.
 - i) Someone once said that we should never doubt in the dark what we’ve learned in the light.
 - ii) Our faith, born in the light, grows in the dark.
 - (1) The test of our character is what we do in the dark.
 - c) Isaiah 50:10
 - i) Our faith is developed in the darkness when we:
 - (1) Look to the Lord.
 - (a) Trust in the Lord.
 - (b) Warren Wiersbe said that we live by promises, not by explanations.
 - (c) Don’t demand that God explain something to you; just stay in His Word.
 - (d) Just because it doesn’t make sense to us doesn’t mean that it doesn’t make sense.
 - (i) Just because it doesn’t make sense to us now doesn’t mean that it will not make sense to us later on.
 - (e) Thomas Watson, the Puritan pastor of yesteryear, said, “Where reason cannot wade, faith must swim.”
 - (f) Keep trusting and obeying God.

- (g) If you're praying and darkness comes, keep on praying, even when you don't feel like praying.
 - (i) Even in the darkness, come with both hands filled with the incense of His worth, and keep on praying.
 - (h) If you've been witnessing and darkness comes and nothing makes sense to you, keep on witnessing.
 - (i) If you've been tithing and giving and everything goes upside down, keep tithing.
 - (j) When you don't understand and don't feel like it, lift your hands by faith and praise and trust Him.
- (2) Lean on the Lord.
- (a) Isaiah 50:10
 - (i) The word "stay" in this passage is the root of the word used in Psalm 23 for "staff."
 - 1. Psalm 23:4
 - 2. A staff was something the shepherd would stay upon or lean upon.
 - (b) When you're in the dark, you don't need an explanation; you need God.
 - (i) Stay upon God.
 - (ii) It is better to be in a dark valley leaning on God than on a sunlit peak without Him.
- d) Sometimes we may not know why in order that we might know Who.
- i) Sometimes God removes all answers in order to give us Himself.
 - ii) Psalm 23:1
 - (1) David is talking about God.
 - iii) Psalm 23:4
 - (1) In this verse, David is talking to God.
 - (2) David is having a relationship with God that he could not have had in the light.
- e) The book of Job ends without Job ever understanding.
- i) Job was stumbling through the darkness.
 - (1) Job 19:8
 - ii) Job 13:5
 - (1) Job discovered that relationship is more important than a reason.
- f) Not only is God necessary, but God is enough.
- 4) SOME THINGS ARE SEEN IN THE DARK THAT CANNOT BE SEEN IN THE LIGHT (ISAIAH 50:3-4)
- a) We will understand some things in the darkness that we would never understand in the light.
 - b) Isaiah 50:3-4
 - i) There are some treasures in the darkness.

- c) Sometimes the Bible uses darkness as a symbol of evil, and sometimes it uses darkness as a symbol of perplexity.
 - i) Isaiah 45:3
 - (1) There are some treasures that are seen in the dark that cannot be seen in the light.
 - (a) Psalm 148:3
 - (i) Stars do not go away in the daytime, but the only time we can see them is at night.
 - (ii) In the light, we see that which is near; but in the dark, we see that which is far away.
 - 1. We may see more clearly in the light, but we see further in the night.
- 5) IT IS BETTER TO LEAN ON GOD IN THE DARKNESS THAN TO STAND ALONE IN MAN-MADE LIGHT (ISAIAH 50:11)
 - a) One of the dangers of darkness is that we may be tempted to light our own fire.
 - b) If we are fearing and obeying God and then the darkness comes, that means that the darkness has been ordained of God.
 - i) Isaiah 50:3
 - ii) Darkness can never chase away the light.
 - (1) Light always chases away the dark.
 - (2) The only way darkness can come is for light to be removed.
 - iii) If the light has been removed, that means that God in His sovereignty has allowed you to be in the darkness.
 - (1) God has a reason for you to be in the darkness.
 - (a) It is God who has clothed the Heavens with sackcloth according to Isaiah 50:3.
 - c) If God has a reason for the darkness, then we would be foolish to light our own fire.
 - i) We will get into difficulty when we try to undo what God has done.
 - d) Man-made fire is deceptive.
 - i) If you try to walk in the light of the fire, the sparks you've kindled will not be a sure guide.
 - ii) Isaiah 50:11
 - (1) We will have great difficulty when we, in a time of God-ordained darkness, light our own fire.
 - e) The Bible gives us examples of those who lit their own fires:
 - i) Abraham
 - (1) Genesis 15-16
 - (2) God told Abraham in a time of light that He would give Abraham a son who would bless the world and that Abraham's descendants would be like the sand of the seashore and like the stars.
 - (3) Year after year passed with no son.

- (4) Abraham decided to try to help God out because it was darkness, and he couldn't understand.
- (5) Abraham lit his own fire, and Ishmael was born.
 - (a) For centuries and millenniums, the offspring of Abraham have been made to lie down in sorrow because Abraham could not trust God and took matters into his own hand.
- ii) Moses
 - (1) Exodus 2:11-12, Acts 7:22-29
 - (2) God called Moses to lead the children of Israel out of bondage, but Moses didn't understand how God was going to do it.
 - (a) Moses was in a time of darkness.
 - (3) Moses took matters into his own hands and killed an Egyptian and buried him.
 - (a) God's wind uncovered Moses' deed.
 - (4) Moses, who set out to be a missionary, ended up a murderer.
 - (5) As a result, Moses spent forty years on the backside of the desert, lying down in sorrow.
 - (a) He lit his own fire.
- iii) Simon Peter
 - (1) Luke 22:31-33, 50-62
 - (2) In dark Gethsemane, things did not make sense.
 - (3) Rather than believing what God had shown him in the light, Simon Peter in the darkness drew his sword and cut off the ear of Malchus, the high priest's servant.
 - (4) As a result, Simon Peter wept bitterly.
 - (a) He tried to light his own fire.
- 6) IF YOUR SUN HAS SET, IT WILL RISE AGAIN (ISAIAH 50:4)
 - a) When we go through darkness and come out of it, we will know some things that other people won't know.
 - b) Isaiah 50:4
 - i) When we've gone through the dark night of the soul, the morning will come; there is a better day coming.
 - (1) God will turn every hurt to a hallelujah, every tear to a pearl and every Calvary to an Easter.
 - c) Psalm 112:4
 - d) Psalm 30:5
 - e) Sometimes we become so dazzled by this world that God in His love just lets us know something of the treasures of the darkness.
- 7) CONCLUSION
 - a) In our deepest, darkest sorrow, the eyes of our Heavenly Father are upon us.
 - b) If you're not a child of God and not trusting God, there's another kind of darkness.

- i) It's an everlasting darkness.
- ii) Those who don't know Jesus Christ go from this life into eternal, everlasting darkness.
- iii) Without Jesus, the sun will never rise for you.
- c) Jesus Christ is the light of the world.
- d) Do you know Jesus personally? If not, you can pray to Him today by asking Him to come into your life.
- e) Call upon Jesus today. Repent (turn) from your sins, and turn to Jesus. Ask Him to forgive you of your sins, and acknowledge Him as Lord of your life.
 - i) Romans 3:23
 - ii) Romans 10:9-10
 - iii) Romans 10:13
 - iv) Acts 16:31
 - v) John 3:16