Psalm 71: A Psalm For Dark Nights
Message 8: Psalms For Everyday Living Series
Psalm 71:1-24

INTRODUCTION

Last Lord’s Day evening we studied that beautiful 23rd Psalm. Tonight I want us to move all the way over to the 71st Psalm. Now don’t fear! I will go back and preach on a number of those Psalms in between Psalm 23 and Psalm 71 as the series continues.

I have entitled tonight’s message: “A PSALM FOR DARK NIGHTS.”

(Before we begin let’s go to GOD in prayer.)

Night Time is somewhat of an “enigma.”

(1) On the one hand..........Night Time can be very BEAUTIFUL.

Who among us hasn’t been amazed by the beauty of a Black Night Sky filled with hundreds upon thousands of brilliantly shining stars?

And certainly, one of the most breath-taking scenes in all of nature is a “FULL MOON” dancing on the waters of a pond........or river...........or lake?

Night Time can indeed be very BEAUTIFUL.
(2) But then on the other hand.......Night Time can be very DREADFUL.

Most rapes.......robberies.......murders........acts of domestic violence…..and drunk driving deaths occur in the night.

STORMS can be bad at any time, but don’t they seem especially more fearful at night?

And while there is never a good time to get BAD NEWS, getting a telephone call in the middle of the night seems all the more dreadful

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TRANSITION INTO PSALM 71
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Sometimes periods of discouragement or depression or grief or trouble can seem like “one continuous dark night.” It appears the writer of this 71st Psalm must have been going through such an experience in his own life.

Un-like most of the Psalms...........we do not find the name of the author of this 71ST PSALM inscribed at the top of the Psalm.

But because Psalm 71 seems to pick right up where Psalm 70 left off, many believe Psalm 71 was likely written by David.

Some scholars believe David wrote this Psalm during a time of terrible family discord and political turmoil.

If you ever feel overwhelmed by your own family problems, take some time to read about all the problems David’s family had. They were the “classic example” of a dysfunctional family.
Early in David’s reign as King, one of his sons named ABSALOM led a rebellion against his father, and tried to take the throne from him and make himself King. This insurrection cost David a terrible price. For one thing ABSALOM lost his life, and the ISRAELITE people became very divided in their loyalty. While many still wanted David to be the King, a great number had become supportive of Absalom.

But as we come to this 71ST PSALM, David is an old man now......he is in the twilight of his political career. And now another son, ADONIJAH is fighting with David for the throne that David had already promised to Solomon.

Psalm 71 is a “Jewel” in the scriptures. Hidden within its twenty four verses, are at least 50 QUOTES from some of the others Psalms.

It is as though DAVID has brought all these pieces of GODLY WISDOM together and formed a beautiful mosaic to ease his troubled heart and spirit as well as those of others who would read this Psalm.

Read Psalm 71 (all 24 verses)

For just a few minutes I want us to consider a couple of key thoughts from this 71ST PSALM.
First of all.............consider:

I. THE REALITY OF TROUBLES IN THE BELIEVER’S LIFE

1. Being a Christian does not grant any of us immunity from the suffering, pain and heartache of life. Every illness, every disease, every tragedy, every trouble that can fall upon non-Christians can fall upon the Christian as well.

ILLUSTRATION: Back in the 1800’s.............the name of Charles Haddon Spurgeon was a household name. By the age of 22, Spurgeon had become the most popular and most famous preacher in the entire world.

The Metropolitan Tabernacle in London, England........which could seat 6,000 people.............was built especially for Spurgeon, to accommodate the huge masses of people who would come to hear him preach the gospel.

However, toward the close of his remarkable ministry, Charles Spurgeon never knew a day without excruciating pain. He became stooped over and was barely able to move. A couch was placed on the platform of the Metropolitan Tabernacle, and there Spurgeon would lie until it was time for him to get up and preach. He had to be helped to the pulpit by one of the ushers.............then after he poured his heart and soul out in his message.............the attending usher would help Brother Spurgeon back to the couch, where he would once again lie down.

In the midst of his terrible suffering and pain, no one ever heard Spurgeon utter a word of complaint or bitterness toward God. He always spoke of the all-sufficient grace of God, which was greater than all his pain.
2. Do you know whether you are a “new babe in Christ” or an “old seasoned veteran Christian” the truth is, so long as we remain in this old sinful, fallen world, we will go through many “dark nights” of sorrow and grief and heartache and trouble.

3. In this 71 Psalm David reminds us of three sources of trouble in life that can turn our days into “long dark nights.”

(A) First, sometimes TROUBLES come from our battles with **UNGODLY FOES**. *verse 4*

It's bad enough to have an enemy.........what's even worse is when your enemy is a member of your own family.

Remember earlier I told you that if David is indeed the writer of this 71<sup>st</sup> Psalm he had two sons, two of his own flesh and blood turn into his greatest foes.

**APPLICATION**

*Perhaps, like David.........you have been engaged in some on-going battles with a member of your own family.*

......Sadly, one's own mate at times can become one's worst enemy. I've seen this happen in a number of Christian families over the years.

.....Perhaps you have a son or daughter who is rebelling against your authority as a parent and you find yourself in a very tense, highly combative relationship.

......Perhaps you have in-laws who are always meddling in your business and giving unwanted advice.

.........Maybe you have a family member who is addicted to alcohol or drugs and its taking a toll on your whole family.

.........Or perhaps your greatest foe is not a family member, but rather someone you work with every day.
Any time we find ourselves involved in stressful relationships with anyone whether it be family, friend or foe, it can make for some very long, dark nights.

(B) In Verse 9, David tells us sometimes TROUBLES come when we face an UNCERTAIN FUTURE.

READ: VERSE 9

Remember, David is well up in years at this point........and AGE has become his great “faceless foe.”

Each night when David lays his head down on his pillow, he is deeply troubled about what the future may hold.

“I’m an old man now.......I’m not as strong as I used to be....
my “giant slaying days” are over.........”I can’t lead my army into battle”......Many who once supported me have turned against me. Maybe they are right. Maybe I’m no longer fit to be King.

APPLICATION: Certainly all of us go through times where we are concerned about AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE.

-Some of you may be facing an UNCERTAIN FUTURE regarding your job. “Is my job secure?” “If I lose this job how will I find another in today’s tough job market?” “And if I lose my job how am I going to pay my bills and provide for my family?”

-Uncertainty about the future is certainly a concern of many older people. “Who is going to care for me when I get to the point I can no longer care for myself?” “Will I be put in nursing home?” “How will I survive on my fixed income?” “What will I do when I can no longer drive?”

I think as Christians we all have a certainty about our future when this life is over. But sometimes we have some serious concerns about what will happen to us between now and when we go to be with the LORD. Those feelings of “uncertainty” about our future can make for some “long dark nights”
(C) In verses 10-13, David tells us that sometimes TROUBLES come our way because of UNFAITHFUL FRIENDS. 

verses 10-13

Without a doubt, some of the “darkest nights” anyone will ever go through is when they have been “betrayed” by someone they loved and trusted.

-I can’t begin to tell you how many times over the last 30+ years I have had a brokenhearted husband or wife walk into my office sobbing after having found out their mate had been cheating on them.

- Have you ever been betrayed by a close friend or a fellow Church member? Have you ever trusted someone only to have them break that trust?

ILLUSTRATION

Years ago I had a Youth Minister on the staff with me in one of the Churches I served. And he would regularly come to my office to discuss sensitive matters regarding things going on in the Church. After we would have our discussions he would assure me that anything we had talked about would remain confidential. I TRUSTED HIM!

As time went by I found out this Youth Minister was taking all this confidential information he and I had discussed straight to some of the biggest trouble makers in the Church. HE HAD BEEN LYING TO ME FOR YEARS. HE BETRAYED ME!

APPLICATION: If you have ever been “sold out” or “stabbed in the back” by someone you trusted, you know it can make for some very “long dark nights.”

5. TROUBLES are a “painful reality” in the life of each and every believer. Sooner or later every one of us will go through some “long dark nights” brought on by UNGODLY FOES……or UNCERTAINTY about our future or the UNFAITHFULNESS of people we thought were our friends.
Secondly, let’s consider…………..

II. THE RESPONSE TO TROUBLES IN THE BELIEVER’S LIFE

1. After revealing the depths of human despair and defeat, David now points us to the way of VICTORY!

2. David reminds us of THREE THINGS we need to remember any time we go through “life’s dark nights.”

   (A) First of all, REMEMBER THE AWESOME POWER OF GOD

   READ: VERSES 16-18

   No matter how “dark our nights” or “how difficult life becomes,” we who are Christians can take heart in knowing we have the awesome power of GOD on our side.

   Illustration: Have you ever noticed how BIG shadows look on the wall at night? One night recently we left our cat, Mooch, in the house over night. And when I got up in the middle of the night, I saw Mooch’s shadow on the wall and judging by the size of that shadow I would have thought there was a tiger in our family room.

   Any time you and I are going through those “long dark nights” of discouragement or depression or worry or fear or grief, our troubles look like “giant shadows on the wall.” Our troubles seem so big we can’t possibly overcome them.

   But always remember: GOD IS BIGGER THAN ANY OF YOUR TROUBLES AND YOU HAVE HIS AWESOME POWER ON YOUR SIDE!
(B) Secondly, **REMEMBER THE ABIDING FAITHFULNESS OF GOD**

**READ: verses 20-22**

Illustration---Do you remember when you were a child how you would wake up in the middle of the night after a bad dream or after hearing a strange sound? And all the sudden you had this terrifying fear of being alone. And remember how you would seek the security of your mom and dad’s bedroom? Wasn’t it comforting to know your dad and mom were in their bed? They had not left you or forsaken you. They were close by.

Its that way with GOD. When we go through those LONG DARK NIGHTS and we can find great comfort and security in knowing that GOD IS ALWAYS NEARBY and that HE WILL NEVER LEAVE US OR FORSAKE US.

(C) And finally **REMEMBER THE ASSURED VICTORY OF GOD**

**READ: verses 23, 24**

Sometimes our trials and troubles can seem so overwhelming we feel as though they will “finish us off.” But don’t ever forget, our GOD is a GOD of VICTORY not DEFEAT.

And GOD will always turn the long dark nights into victory for those who put their FAITH, HOPE and TRUST in HIM!
CONCLUSION

The next time you find yourself so troubled and so overwhelmed by the trials of life that you cannot sleep................Get up and open your Bible to this 71ST PSALM................This Psalm for a Dark Night.

.....In reading it you will find COMFORT and STRENGTH.

.....In reading it you will be REMINDED of the ........Awesome Power of God........and the Abiding Presence of God........and the Assured Victory of God.

Lord, just today I read
That Paul and Silas were
Stripped and beaten
With wooden whips.
Again and again the rods
Slashed across their bared backs
But in their desolate dungeon,
Their feet clamped in stocks........

They prayed
They sang
They praised.

In this musty midnight of my life
Imprisoned in the dungeon of confusion
Bound by chains of anguish,
Help me, please help me.

To pray
To sing
To praise

Until the foundation shakes,
Until the gates fling open
Until the chains fall of
Until I am free
To share the Good News
With other chain-bound prisoners.

---RUTH HARMS CALKIN
TELL ME AGAIN LORD, I FORGET