

Series (Oct. 11 - Nov. 22): *Battles from the Boardroom of the Soul* by Colin S. Smith

Series Theme Verse: "Bless the Lord, oh my soul, and let everything in me bless His holy name!

Let my whole being bless the Lord and never forget all His good deeds!" -Psalm 103:1-2

Sun., Nov. 8: Trusting in the Darkness, Stewardship 2

Memory Verse: 1 Peter 1:6 "In hope you can rejoice, even if it's necessary for you to be distressed for a short time by various trials."

Text: "We do not grieve like the rest of those who have no hope." -1 Thess 4:13b

Sunday Message: Battle from the Boardroom of the Soul #5: "Trusting in the Darkness"

Sermon Scripture: Psalm 130:1-8

Reading of Scripture: Psalm 143:1-12

Blurb: We will experience times of deep grief, pain, and distress. Rest assured, the world will throw us into a tailspin. But when this happens, what do we do? Do we retreat and close down? Do we lash out in anger? Do we turn numb and lifeless? The Bible says that with God, we persist through these seasons of the dark night of the soul. God will carry us, and eventually God will carry us through. This Sunday we uncover three survival techniques the Bible holds for those suffering great troubles.

OPENING MUSIC: *Oh, God* -Sanctify

WELCOME -Pastor David

MEMORY VERSE -Pastor David

"In hope you can rejoice, even if it's necessary for you to be distressed for a short time by various trials." -1 Peter 1:6

WORSHIP MUSIC SET -Sanctify

Love Is a Mess

Even So Come

Cornerstone

Worship Prayer -Pastor Andrew

SCRIPTURE READING: Psalm 143:1-12 (CEB) -Reader: Bob Rosenbaum

In Psalm 143, King David writes a prayer from a heavy heart. He looks to God for help at a very hard and dark time, seeking hope and help. Psalm 143:1-12:

1 Listen to my prayer, Lord!

Because of your faithfulness, hear my requests for mercy!

Because of your righteousness, answer me!

2 Please don't bring your servant to judgment,

because no living thing is righteous before you.

3 The enemy is chasing me,

crushing my life in the dirt,

forcing me to live in the dark

like those who've been dead forever.

4 My spirit is weak inside me—
 inside, my mind is numb.
 5 I remember the days long past;
 I meditate on all your deeds;
 I contemplate your handiwork.
 6 I stretch out my hands to you;
 my whole being is like dry dirt, thirsting for you.[b] Selah
 7 Answer me, Lord—and quickly! My breath is fading.
 Don't hide your face from me
 or I'll be like those going down to the pit!
 8 Tell me all about your faithful love come morning time,
 because I trust you.
 Show me the way I should go,
 because I offer my life up to you.
 9 Deliver me from my enemies, Lord!
 I seek protection from you.
 10 Teach me to do what pleases you,
 because you are my God.
 Guide me by your good spirit into good land.
 11 Make me live again, Lord, for your name's sake.
 Bring me out of distress because of your righteousness.
 12 Wipe out my enemies because of your faithful love.
 Destroy everyone who attacks me,
 because I am your servant.

GROW MOMENT: Stewardship -Teresa Gruber (video)

PRAYERS: For our Country & Veteran's Day -Pastor David

John 15:13 "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends."
 Wednesday Veteran's Day video!

GENERATIONAL BRIDGE: "Song for All Ages: *Love the Lord*" - Pastor Andrew

MESSAGE: Battle from the Boardroom of the Soul #5: "Trusting in the Darkness"

PP#1: Battle from the Boardroom of the Soul: Trusting in the Darkness

"We do not grieve like the rest of those who have no hope." -1 Thess 4:13b

Battle from the Boardroom of the Soul. Trusting in the Darkness. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14
 "Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of those who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in Him."

Sometimes, when we take that inward journey into our souls, we find that the members of the board are not shouting at each other. There are times, very difficult times, when the boardroom is silent. The soul experiences deep struggles, overwhelming sorrow. In books and articles I see it talked about as "The dark night of the soul." This phrase was first used by St. John of the Cross, a

Spanish monk, in the 1500s, in a poem expressing a sense of not being able to know God fully, especially at times when we really desire to see God more. It's come to mean times of deep sorrow and despair. F. Scott Fitzgerald penned his famous line, "In a real dark night of the soul it is always three o'clock in the morning."

In the Bible's book of poems and songs, the Psalms, all of the feelings and attitudes of the soul are expressed. Every human feeling is there. The Psalms teach us that we don't have to clean up our thoughts before coming to God. We can take to God exactly what we are feeling, and that's okay. So, no matter what you are going through or what you are experiencing, you can go the Psalms and you will find words there that you can take to God. God hears all of our words, and understands.

And sure enough, in the Psalms, we see deep pain honestly and rawly expressed by God's people. You know, there is some comfort—when you grieve so deeply, struggle with such difficulty—to know that others also have experienced such pain. The Psalms help us join with other voices who have experienced what we are experiencing. And these witnesses all found ways of taking their pain into God's presence. That's where our hope comes from.

PP#2: "My soul is in anguish. How long, O Lord, how long?" -Psalm 6:3

Psalm 13:1-2 "How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me?" -Psalm 13:1

"My soul refuses to be comforted." -Psalm 77:2

"My soul is weary with sorrow." -Psalm 119:28

"Out of the depths I cry to you." -Psalm 130:1

Psalm 6:3 says, "My soul is in anguish. How long, O Lord, how long will this last?" Psalm 77:2 "My soul refuses to be comforted," the sting of pain is too great right now. Psalm 119:28 "My soul is weary with sorrow." It drags on and on. He has grown weary of his burden of sorrow. Psalm 130, our Scripture for today, "Out of the depths I cry to you."

Life includes times of deep pain and anguish. None of us are spared. Maybe on the outside, we look normal, but we're dying on the inside. And as Christians, this pain usually includes the struggle that God seems distant. Psalm 13:1-2 "How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me. How long must I take counsel in my soul and have sorrow in my heart all the day?"

Some of us may be there right now, feeling like this. I'm glad you're here. You need to hear this. Some will remember this with vivid memories. Some are about to face it soon.

How do we deal with this? How do we face these great and painful inner struggles?

Let's take a walk through Psalm 130. It's a walk into the inner boardroom of the soul of God's people experiencing despair. What does this poem, this song of grief, tell us about how to deal with such difficult times?

PP#3: Psalm 130:1-8 (CEB)

1 I cry out to you from the depths, Lord—

2 my Lord, listen to my voice!

Let your ears pay close attention to my request for mercy!

3 If you kept track of sins, Lord—

my Lord, who would stand a chance?

4 But forgiveness is with you—

that's why you are honored.

Now, this Psalm was intended to be said by all the people together. So let's do that. Let's read it together. Please join with me.

1 I cry out to you from the depths, Lord—

2 my Lord, listen to my voice!

Let your ears pay close attention to my request for mercy!

3 If you kept track of sins, Lord—

my Lord, who would stand a chance?

4 But forgiveness is with you—

that's why you are honored.

PP#4: Trusting the Darkness (Psalm 130)

1. Do not deny the darkness

Pause there a moment. Here we have our first survival strategy. In this Psalm, and in all the Scriptures, we are urged to be honest about our inner struggle, to admit it, and name it. Do not deny the darkness! The Psalm rawly begins, "Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord!" We have to face our pain, honestly admit it, speak of it. Only then, you see, are we able to bring it into God's presence.

This is not easy to do, you know. It's easier to ignore it, or gloss it over.

Consider experiencing a horrible tragedy. Someone close to you has suffered a terrible experience, or has died. Some long-term dream has just crashed down. Something has happened that will change your life forever. The board members of your soul come into the room, stunned.

Mind says, "I'm reeling."

Heart moans, "I'm broken."

Will sighs, "I'm shattered."

Conscience asks, "What could I have done differently?"

Memory admits, "I feel sick."

Imagination is dumbfounded. This is worse than anything he could have anticipated.

There is a heavy atmosphere. Finally, mind blurts out, "I don't feel like a meeting." The board members sit staring at the table. There's an eerie silence. The soul is numb. No one knows what to say. Soul waits to hear some direction, some comfort.

What *doesn't* help is when some well-meaning Christian tells the board, "It was God's plan." "God is in control." "Your loved one's in a better place." "It's for the best this way." "You'll get over it. It just takes time."

No! There's a serious disconnect between the hope and confidence in those words, and what the soul is experiencing. When you're in the dark night of the soul, you cannot perceive any immediate hope, any comfort.

So, well-meaning Christians, be careful what you say to those who are experiencing great grief and pain. Don't offer quick platitudes. Don't tell them that they'll be okay. What they need—what you must do—is try in some way to be with them where they are, to try to enter into their pain.

You see, when we're not in this trauma, we are rushing through our days. When we encounter someone in deep grief, we pause for a moment, and with genuine care, try to offer some encouragement or support. We want to lift their spirits, so they don't feel as bad any more. But the wrong thing to do is try to make them feel better, or try in some way to fix it, or fix them. No. You can't take away their pain. But what you can do is acknowledge it. You can name it's real. And you can be there with them in it, so they are not alone. Do not try to fix them.

PP#5: *Image of Job's friends sitting with him silently*

I love the story of Job, when he experienced his avalanche of troubles. His good friends came to him. See that? They stopped what they were doing, and found a way to be with him. But when they came, it says, they didn't say anything. Job 2:11-13, "When Job's three friends heard about all this disaster that had happened to him, they came, each one from his home . . . They agreed to come so they could console and comfort him. When they looked up from a distance they could hardly recognize him, and they wept loudly. Each one tore his garment and scattered dust above his head toward the sky. They sat with Job on the ground seven days and seven nights, not speaking a word to him, for they saw how great his suffering was."

So, don't try to fix it. Their soul is overwhelmed. Simply be there. Hold them. Don't try to say too much. It's okay to be silent. Even when they ask you, "Why?" Simply say, "I don't know." And then let the silence tick away. They may want you to say something that will lighten their pain. But resist. When you do finally try to say something, just say that it hurts. Tell them it's okay to be angry, or sad, or confused. Or share about a time you felt that God was so distant.

PP#6: Psalm 130:1-8 (CEB)

5 I wait for the Lord.

My soul waits,
and I hope in God's promise.

6 My soul waits for my Lord—
more than the night watch waits for morning;
yes, more than the night watch waits for morning!

Let's go back to Psalm 130, and keep reading. We start again with verse 5. Let's not read too quickly. Join with me:

5 I wait for the Lord.

**My soul waits,
and I hope in God's promise.**

**6 My soul waits for my Lord—
more than the night watch waits for morning;
yes, more than the night watch waits for morning!**

PP#7: Trusting the Darkness (Psalm 130)

1. Do not deny the darkness
2. Wait for the Lord

Here we have the second survival strategy. We may want someone to come in and fix it, to take at least some of the pain away, but what we need to do is simply wait. We wait in the struggle. This is no fun! I think that's why it's called the "dark *night* of the soul" because it's not just a passing moment, or an hour or two. It stretches on and on. The Psalm was being honest when it said that he grew tired of being in grief. It's a time of languishing, but all you can do—all you should try to do—is wait through it. This is so hard! We want relief! But the reality is of such deep pain, is that there is no relief. What must we do while experiencing such darkness? 1. We acknowledge it's real, and 2. We wait. We hold on. At times we simply watch the clock move.

Our instant culture has no idea what to do with this. It denies how we really experience things, what really happens. Worldly wisdom suggests ways that we can help move ourselves out into the next phase, to start going again. But there are no quick answers.

But waiting doesn't mean staying in bed all day, day after day. You have to guard against slipping into debilitating depression. To do that, you must keep doing simple things. Do house chores. Take care of the lawn. Fix the toaster. Keep planning events, keep going places. Even though you are numb on the inside, keep your body moving.

PP#8: *An image of someone struggling along, with the first light dawning off in the distance.*

The Bible calls us to wait for the Lord. That means lifting your pain to God, and filling your ears with God's words. And as you do, as you keep lifting up your heart to God, as you go over His words again and again, at some point, there will be a dawn of hope deep in your soul. You can't make it happen, but you will notice it. Verse 6 says, "More than watchmen wait for the morning." They are facing east, looking for the first faint lightening of dawn. As you wait, face east. Turn your face to God. Tell yourself that God will help you. God will come through for you. Read the story of Jesus' death and burial. Pause there for a bit, and remember that Easter did come. This is what God does. This is who God is. This is your God.

PP#9: Psalm 130:1-8 (CEB)

7 Israel, wait for the Lord!
 Because faithful love is with the Lord;
 because great redemption is with our God!
 8 He is the one who will redeem Israel
 from all its sin.

Let's finish the Psalm. Verse 7, join me:

**7 "Israel, wait for the Lord!
 Because faithful love is with the Lord;
 because great redemption is with our God!
 8 He is the one who will redeem Israel from all its sin.**

PP#10: Trusting the Darkness (Psalm 130)

1. Do not deny the darkness
2. Wait for the Lord
3. You will not be disappointed

And here is our third survival strategy: remind yourself—again and again—that you will not be disappointed. It is worth waiting on God when you are in the depth of sorrow. Now, the temptation is to cut your losses and choose some other way. Lash out. Seek revenge. Make others hurt, too. But verse 7 tells us, "Put your hope in the Lord, in His unfailing love. In Him is full [the word here literally is plentiful] redemption." Peter says in 1 Peter 6, "You now rejoice in this hope, even if for a time you suffer many trials." Through it your faith is purified. Verse 8, "Although you've not seen Jesus, you love Him. Even though you don't see Him now, you trust Him and so rejoice with a glorious joy that is too much for words. 9 *You are receiving* the goal of your faith: your salvation."

Jesus will appear. He will, at some point, work joy back into your heart. He will bring life again to your numb bodies. You will live again: God is the author of life. God is the God of resurrection! It may not be your reality yet. It may not be your experience now. But God sees the longer time frame.

What do you tell a teenager who's heart is broken by their crush? It may hurt a lot right now, but you'll fall in love again. Take a longer view. For all of us languishing in dark nights of the soul: trust in God over the long haul. Lift your eyes and look at those who have hurt in the past but who live in joy today. You're heading in that direction.

God will bring a bigger future, more than you can imagine right now...more than you could ever imagine! Right now your reality is framed by what was...what you once new. But God will bring a new reality on what you cannot yet see.

Now, in truth, for some that might not come fully until heaven. You may have a burden that will not be lifted until glory. But God will help you carry it. For some, it may come sooner. But for all of us, we will certainly say, "I'm so glad I waited."

PP#11: *Image of Job celebrating at a banquet after he was restored.*

At the end of the story of faithful Job, it says, "The Lord made him prosperous again and gave him twice as much as he had before....The Lord blessed the latter part of Job's life more than the first." (42:10-12)

In the Garden of Gethsemane, when Jesus was arrested, He said, "This is the hour when darkness reigns" (Luke 22:53). And when Jesus was crucified, He cried out "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46). Looking at that horrific scene, what good could possibly have come out of that? The disciple, those who had followed Jesus, had no answer. They could see no good. But faithful to the end, Jesus' last words were trusting God even in the darkness. He cried out, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." (Luke 23:46)

And then, on the third day, God did something amazing. God brought Easter redemption.

PP#12: *Image of a person in grief or trouble with the light of God's help dawning on him.*

In the boardroom of the soul experiencing the dark night, the somber members reflect on the deep blackness they find themselves in. But then, the Holy Spirit comes in and sits in the seventh chair. He looks intently at each member and then speaks. "I know the pain of this soul. Mind, I know all your questions. Heart, I feel all your pain. Conscience, I know all your burdens. Imagination, I know all your fears. Memory, I know your regrets. Will, I know you feel spent. But I'm not here as a visitor. I've come to stay, so we can work through this darkness together. Mind, I know there is a lot you don't know, but I want you to focus on what you do know. What can you tell us?"

Mind stammers: "Well, all I know is that we are in great pain and darkness."

Holy Spirit: "That's a good start. We all agree on that. What else? Can we agree that God is with us?"

Heart cries out: "No! I can't feel Him!"

Conscience: "But that's not what He said. You can't feel anything but pain. But His question was not 'Can you feel God here?,' but *is* He here?"

Memory: "He has to be here. He has been with us before when we've suffered so."

Imagination: "It's like sun, although sometimes hidden behind a cloud. It's still there. It's only hidden for a time."

Holy Spirit: "Can we also agree God will bring us through?"

Heart, painfully: "When? I don't how much longer I can stand this!"

Conscience "We're not talking length. The question is simply *if* God will do it, if we choose to believe God will. The alternative I see is to stay here in the darkness. But no one else can help us."

Will: "I move that we affirm 1. Our position that we are in the darkness, 2. That God is with us, and 3. That God will bring us through."

Mind: "I second! With God, the darkness never gets the last word. I've seen that in the Bible. Let's wait to see God's full redemption."

The members voted, and even heart, the last to raise his hand, was able to agree.

Amen.

CLOSING SONG: *Leaning on the Everlasting Arms* -Sanctify

ANNOUNCEMENTS -Pastor David

Next week's message: "Finding Rest and Restoration"

OFFERING: -Pastor David

Please leave your offerings in the box as you leave.

MEMORY VERSE -Pastor David

"In hope you can rejoice, even if it's necessary for you to be distressed for a short time by various trials." -1 Peter 1:6

BENEDICTION -Pastor David

CLOSING MUSIC -Sanctify