

# SUNDAY ARTICLE

ST DAVID'S PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH ♦ 25 MARCH 2018



## When the Darkness Overwhelms

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Disheartening conversations. Division within the body of Christ. Fear for my husband's safety as he drives. Family members facing heart-wrenching trials. Friends suffering physically, emotionally, spiritually. Strained relationships. And those are just my more immediate concerns.

There's the global persecution of Christians, terrorism, natural disasters, mass shootings, and more. Oh yeah, and my own struggles with idolatry, apathy, and distrust of God's goodness.

Has anyone else felt like the darkness – both within and without – might just consume you lately?

### **True Light**

Last year I studied the Gospel of John in my Bible Study Fellowship group. One of the themes is light versus darkness.

In John 1, Jesus is referred to as “the true light, which gives light to everyone” (John 1:9). He is “the light [that] shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it” (John 1:5). Yet when the true light came into the world, the world

didn't recognize Him, nor His own people receive him.

Why did the majority of people reject Jesus? John tells us: “the light has come into the world, and the people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil” (John 3:19).

People may have loved the darkness, but the darkness couldn't overcome the light. Jesus didn't come in vain. “But to all who did receive Him, who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:12-13).

Surrounded by the darkness of this world, Jesus transformed children of darkness into children of light. He promised that “whoever follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (John 8:12).

### **Dark Night, Dark Day**

Fast forward to the night before His death. After Jesus washes Judas' feet and shares a meal with him, Judas leaves to betray Jesus for the price of a slave. “So, after receiving the morsel of bread, he immediately went out. And it was night” (John 13:30).

A dark night indeed.

On the same night Jesus is betrayed with a kiss, the rest of his friends abandon Him (Matthew 26:56). Fully aware His friends were about to fail

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Him, Jesus offers them words of comfort: "In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

Overcome the world? Really? The next day, Jesus was nailed to a cross, consumed by physical and spiritual darkness (Matthew 27:45-46).

But it is there – in midday darkness, suffering the greatest injustice of all time – that Jesus was actually defeating the darkness of this world (Mark 15:33-34; Acts 2:36; Isaiah 53:3-10). This is why He could call the cross – the very tool used to shame and punish criminals – His glory (John 13:31-32; Hebrews 12:2).

Jesus bore *our* darkness in His body and faced the wrath of God on our behalf (2 Corinthians 5:21; Romans 5:9; Isaiah 53:10). On that third day He rose in victory over our sin, death, Satan – all the darkness (Colossians 2:13-15). Jesus overcame the darkness.

### **In the Light, We Overcome**

What does this mean for us here and now? In his epistle, the apostle John tells us: "Everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world – our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?" (1 John 5:4-5). This means that if you're in Christ, you're in the light – the very light who overcame all of the world's darkness.

Right now we face trials of all kinds: tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger, the sword (Romans 8:35). "As it is written, 'For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.'" (Romans 8:36) Yet because we are in the light Himself, we know that "in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us" (Romans 8:37).

We pray now for deliverance, protection, healing, and all kinds of help. Amazingly, we often see God answer with a resounding, "Yes!" to our

persistent prayers. But we don't get to say what God knows is best for us here and now. Sometimes He says, "No," and in His providence the cancer stays, the slander persists, the violence attacks.

We look to Him, we cry out to Him, and we trust in Him – even as the darkness closes in. Whether on this side of eternity or the other, He will make right every wrong (Isaiah 61:11; 2 Corinthians 4:17). No darkness can thwart the amazing plan of God to bring us safely into His kingdom, be it through many tribulations (2 Timothy 4:18; Acts 14:22).

Because of Jesus, we can and will overcome the darkness, both within and without. In Him, life will swallow up death (1 Corinthians 15:51-57). In Him, light will consume the darkness (Revelation 21:23-25). We may feel overwhelmed by the darkness, but it will never consume us.

The light is our hope, and He is risen. So we will rise.

*"And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, and its gates will never be shut by day – and there will be no night there."* (Revelation 21:23-25)



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