

THE DARK NIGHT OF THE SOUL

FINDING HOPE IN THE MIDST OF PAIN

SHANE IDLEMAN

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The Dark Night of the Soul: Finding Hope in the Midst of Pain

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Dedication

Since my Lord and Savior brought me through every dark night, including my most recent one, this book is dedicated to Him. He rekindled my flame and inspired me to write this resource to help the hopeless and strengthen the weak.

It's also dedicated to my wife, Morgan, who was a pillar of support during the darkest season of my life. Through this, our marriage became much stronger as we focused on unconditional love as well as our relationship with the Lord. She encouraged, helped, motivated, and, at times, convicted me to step out in faith.

I'm also forever thankful for the support of my five kids. My prayer is that I will become a better husband, father, and pastor because of their unconditional support. We are trusting God all the way to the finish line.

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I

THE DARK NIGHT OF THE SOUL

Introduction

The phrase “the dark night of the soul” represents a deep season of suffering and confusion in which we feel abandoned by God, but the ultimate purpose of the “dark night” is to deepen our spiritual union with Him rather than lead us into despair.

Writing about this topic, theologian R.C. Sproul states that this darkness is something that “the greatest of Christians have suffered from time to time” — it is linked to a crisis of faith where we feel abandoned by God.

Sproul adds, “We move from faith to faith, and in between we may have periods of doubt when we cry, ‘Lord, I believe, help Thou my unbelief’.”

The Turning Point

This can be an incredible turning point: **We either turn toward God, or we turn toward bitterness, anger, and frustration.**

We must choose wisely; it is a very critical time in the life of a believer. Many of us go through multiple dark seasons — a failed marriage, the loss of a loved one, or a debilitating diagnosis.

For example, I went through a very dark season in the late 1990s that drew me back to the Lord. Another hard season followed in 2020; I wrote a book about it in 2025, *I Almost Quit*. Then another very dark season came when a biopsy in 2026 revealed *cancer* (while writing this book, believe it or not).

We can spend weeks in a dark place, both mentally and emotionally. It becomes a battle. Discouragement is one of the enemy's greatest weapons against us. In these moments, **we must choose thankfulness over fear and joy over dread**. Remember, God has the final say.

Faith Revealed in Crisis

Dark seasons reveal what we actually believe, not just what we *say* we believe. The phrase “*the dark night of the soul*” captures a moment we all dread. It's the moment when the floor drops out from underneath us and we realize we are not in control; we come face-to-face with something we cannot fix.

Believe it or not, this can actually be a good thing. **It's often only when we hit rock bottom that we turn to the Rock at the bottom (Jesus).**

In Acts 12, we watch this happen in real time. The apostle James is killed by King Herod, and Peter is arrest-

ed, awaiting a similar fate. If we put ourselves in Peter's shoes, we can imagine the dread: *If James has been executed, what's coming for me?*

Some of us know that type of fear. Even if we've never been in a prison cell awaiting execution, we have received the call from the doctor, a friend, or the police department. We may have watched a relationship fall apart or experienced financial uncertainty.

We've no doubt carried grief and have lived through moments of pain — that's often when we realize, "*I can't fix this!*" But again, this can be a glorious moment. When our world falls apart and "the dark night of the soul" grips our hearts, we must choose worship over worry, faith over fear, and trust over doubt.

Anchor vs Slogan

"Worry" means being anxious or troubled about actual or potential problems. We're often inclined to worry about what's coming so we can change course or slip into protection mode.

In that sense, anxiety can feel complicated because it can sometimes push us toward necessary changes, such as repentance and the use of practical wisdom. **But when worry becomes unbiblical, it becomes our master and the antithesis of trust.**

Trust in God and worry cannot both have dominion in the same heart. There is a constant tension between trusting God and worrying, and we feel it deeply. We need

community, but we are not designed to be carried by people; we are called to cast our cares on God and let Him carry the load (1 Peter 5:7).

The hard truth is that people will let us down. And at times, that disappointment, however painful, can actually serve us. When friends, parents, pastors, and others fail us, we are forced to lean more fully on God. ***What wounds us often becomes the place where our dependence on our Savior deepens our faith.***

When life is hard, when we are alone and disappointed, this is where the rubber meets the road in the Christian life. It's easy to talk about God's goodness when life is easy. It's easy to say we trust Jesus when the bills are paid, relationships are stable, and the body is healthy. But when the wheels fall off, and the storm comes, that's when worship becomes real. **That's when we discover whether our faith is a slogan or an anchor.**

Suffering Inside and Outside

In Acts 12, the stakes are high. Peter isn't facing a minor inconvenience; he's facing real opposition. Pain not only comes from persecution, but also through illness, grief, depression, anxiety, and even spiritual warfare. While we may not share the same physical circumstances of suffering as the apostle Peter, we do share the same battle: the battle for our minds.

Suffering can look different from persecution. *Our world can fall apart without chains, guards, or prison walls.*

Sometimes the pressure is external and obvious, but other times, it's internal and unseen. It often begins with a quiet unraveling in the heart, the mind, or the body. It is the kind of suffering that does not announce itself publicly, but it still weighs heavily day after day.

Some suffering cannot be explained away as mere circumstance or emotion. There are moments when what we are experiencing goes beyond stress, fatigue, or discouragement. Scripture is clear that the spiritual realm is real and that believers can experience spiritual opposition and oppression. **“A Christian can have joy in his heart while there is still spiritual depression in his head” (R.C. Sproul).**

We need wisdom and discernment, especially in the midst of trials and challenges. Physical exhaustion, hormonal imbalance, mental health challenges, and lifestyle factors matter, and we should never ignore them. But neither should we ignore the reality that there is an enemy who harasses, oppresses, and seeks to discourage God's people.

The apostle Paul speaks honestly about this when he described a “thorn in the flesh ... a messenger of Satan” sent to buffet him (2 Corinthians 12:7–9). He pleads with the Lord for its removal. But the answer he receives is not the one we often want. God does not remove the thorn. Instead, He says, “My grace is sufficient for you” (2 Corinthians 12:9). **In other words, the suffering remains, but so does God's sustaining presence.**

The Inner Battlefield

Persecution does not always chain our bodies; sometimes it chains our minds through discouragement. It is possible to be free and still feel imprisoned, and it is possible to be confined and still be free (confined by men, but free through God).

Some people sit in actual prison cells and worship God with peace and clarity, while others walk freely through life but are bound by fear, anxiety, shame, discouragement, and despair. The circumstances are different, but the bondage can feel just as real.

This is why discouragement is such a powerful weapon of the enemy. The word itself tells the story. Discouragement removes courage, and when courage is gone, obedience becomes difficult, prayer becomes heavy, and worship feels distant.

Discouragement also spreads quickly. It is contagious. But courage is also contagious. Parents shape it. Spouses reinforce it. Churches either cultivate it or suffocate it. *The atmosphere we carry matters more than we often realize:* “Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit” (Proverbs 18:21).

Discouragement is one of the enemy’s primary strategies because it is effective. Discouraged believers stop praying boldly. They stop believing expectantly. They hesitate to step forward in obedience. Over time, they begin to shrink back, isolate, and become quiet about their faith.

The Dark Night of the Soul

Scripture is honest about the source of this pressure. We don't blame everything on the demonic, but we also don't ignore that spiritual opposition is real. There is real opposition, real harassment, and real oppression at work in the lives of believers.

The Spiritual Warfare of Fear

Paul reminds Timothy (and us) that God has not given us a spirit of fear (2 Timothy 1:7). Fear does not come from God. So where does it often originate? Scripture reveals that Satan can influence thoughts, afflict bodies, and oppress believers, even if he cannot possess them. Job experienced it (Job 2:7), Paul experienced it (2 Corinthians 12:7), and Peter likely experienced it as he sat chained in a cell, waiting to see whether he would live or die.

Do not assume that strong believers never struggle with fear or discouragement. The battle is often strongest in the mind. Thoughts come uninvited. Doubts whisper. Worst-case scenarios replay themselves over and over. When we are exhausted, sick, grieving, or overwhelmed, those thoughts press harder and feel heavier. **This is not weakness; it's warfare.**

But courage is the heartbeat of a believer's life. Courage to pray. Courage to worship. Courage to obey. Courage to trust God when nothing feels stable. This is why worship is not optional when life is hard. Worship is how we reset our focus and strengthen ourselves in the Lord. Worship is how we remind our hearts of who is actually in control.

The Dark Night of the Soul

The dark night doesn't just reveal our faith — it **re-fines** it, forcing us to ask: Where is God when everything begins to fall apart?

II

SOVEREIGNTY UNDER PRESSURE

Introduction

As the story in Acts continues, Scripture pulls back the curtain and shows us what is really happening beneath the surface. Persecution is not random or accidental; it has a source. The darkness hates the light (John 3:19–20). **And when light exposes what darkness wants to hide, hostility follows.** *Herod does not persecute the church just because Peter is dangerous politically; he persecutes the church because the message of Jesus carries a higher authority.*

When people confess that Jesus is King, every false claim to ultimate power is undermined and exposed (Philippians 2:11). Persecution often comes with applause and worldly approval for this very reason. When James was killed and Peter arrested, the crowd was pleased. Darkness gains a moment of satisfaction when it believes it has silenced the light. **What looks like victory on earth often conceals a very different reality unfolding in heaven.**

Darkness Celebrates Too Soon

Scripture reminds us that ultimate power is not defined by who the crowd approves, but by whom God approves. Herod thinks he has power. Rome thinks it has authority. Darkness thinks it can silence the church. But nothing can stop God from accomplishing His purposes. All the powers of Rome could have surrounded Peter, but it still would not have mattered if God intended to deliver him.

This is one of the great reversals of Scripture: *Darkness celebrates too soon*. It mistakes temporary silence for victory. It rejoices when light is pushed down, mocked, imprisoned, or killed. But history keeps telling the same story: God is never finished. Need more proof? Just look at the Cross, followed by the resurrection.

The Anchor of Sovereignty

We can be tempted to treat God like a fixer, or a genie that will give us a guaranteed outcome — and when His answer is “no,” or “wait,” frustration quickly follows. This is where the doctrine of God’s sovereignty becomes both deeply comforting and deeply puzzling. Acts 12 places us squarely inside that tension. James is killed, but Peter is arrested and freed by God. We are left asking the honest question that most believers eventually face: *why is the outcome so different?*

The tension intensifies when we begin to treat God’s sovereignty like a predictable game. We assume that if we

do the right things, God will always deliver us as we expect. **But Scripture does not offer a system for managing God's actions; it calls us into a posture of trust.** Granted, sometimes changing course through repentance will deliver us, but sometimes it truly is a waiting game — a trusting game.

If we try to predict how God will act in every situation, we will lose our sanity. We compare stories. “He healed that person — why not this one?” And when the outcome differs, our expectations collapse. We wonder why one prodigal comes home quickly, while another stays away for years. Over time, comparisons can leave us jaded, confused, and hurt.

Sovereignty is Not a Formula

God's sovereignty does not operate according to our expectations; it operates according to His foreknowledge. No doubt many were confused when James was killed, but Peter was rescued. And later, according to church history, Peter was killed too — not rescued, not spared, but crucified upside down. *There is no visible formula here, no predictable pattern, no equation we can reverse-engineer.*

This is where sovereignty can become deeply uncomfortable. The point is not that God is careless or cruel. The point is that God is not predictable in the way we want Him to be. If we try to turn His sovereignty into a system that guarantees comfort, we will be crushed by disappointment. And yet, this tension does

not have to lead to despair; it can lead to trust. The choice is ours.

Scripture invites us into a better posture. It teaches us to be open to God's plan and to let go of our expectations. The core truth is worth preserving: **God's sovereignty is not a puzzle to be solved; it is a reality to be trusted.**

We live in a fallen world. Sometimes the Lord opens prison doors. Sometimes He allows suffering to remain. Either way, Scripture brings us back to the same confession of faith. With Job we say, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him" (Job 13:15). And with the psalmist we learn to say, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil" (Psalm 23:4).

Faith Under Pressure

Let me be clear: persecution, whether internal or external, tests our allegiance. It exposes what we really fear losing, such as comfort, approval, safety, and control. When those things are threatened, the heart is revealed.

Pressure has a way of clarifying what truly rules us. This is why persecution often produces division, even within the church. Some Christians will avoid conflict at all costs, while others will accept the cost of obedience. *Weak faith avoids persecution. Woke faith avoids offense. Strong faith follows Christ.* That line is sharp, and it is meant to be. Jesus never promised safety or approval. He promised a cross (Matthew 16:24).

The call, then, is not to panic or to posture, but to re-

main anchored in the truth of Scripture. When our world falls apart, when pressure increases, when voices grow louder, and resistance sharpens, we are brought back to the same decision: **We must choose worship over worry.**

If persecution exposes where our allegiance lies, suffering exposes how deeply we trust. This is where faith becomes genuine. Faith does not mean pretending the pain is not there. **Faith means bringing that pain into the presence of God without conditions or bargaining.**

Scripture gives us example after example of people who trusted God without understanding Him. Job never received an explanation. Paul pleads for relief and is told no; God's grace will be enough to sustain him. Jeremiah watched his nation collapse and wrote the Book of Lamentations through tears. David strengthened himself in the Lord when all hope was gone.

Faith does not always bring clarity, but it can lead to dependence. And that dependence is not theoretical. We see this tension all over the world: believers imprisoned, families grieving, churches suffering under hostile governments. And still, the church grows. Still, worship rises. Still, people come to faith in places where the cost is highest. It's been said, "Where the battle rages is where the loyalty of the soldier is tested."

Prayer Submits to Sovereignty

While Peter is in prison, the church is not strategizing politically. They are not storming the gates. They are pray-

ing. The church gathers in a home and cries out to God on Peter's behalf. Prayer does not always change the outcome, but it always positions the heart.

And in this case, God does act. An angel appears, chains fall, prison doors open, and Peter walks out free. He goes to the house where the church is praying, knocks on the door, and is almost turned away because they cannot believe the very prayer they are praying has actually been answered.

They are faithful enough to pray, but still shocked when God answers. And that should humble us. We often pray with hope mixed with doubt. We ask God to act, while quietly assuming that He probably will not. And yet, God is not limited by our hesitation. *Prayer submits to God's sovereignty, regardless of the outcome.*

Biblical faith is not a denial of pain, but rather confidence in God in the midst of it. *As we grow older, we learn that trusting God's sovereignty is not merely an idea to affirm; it is a life to be lived.* We must be grounded in belief, anchored in faith, and sustained by worship.

Trust is not formed in a moment, but grows over time as we pray, stay in the Word, and keep depending on God. That type of trust is the anchor that holds when everything else shifts. It is developed over time, and in ways we would never choose ourselves, but later we can recognize the specific difficult times when our faith took root.

This does not mean life unfolds according to our expectations. Many assume faith guarantees a certain out-

come, only to discover that sickness, loss, disappointment, and unfulfilled dreams are still part of the human story. That's not pessimism. It's honesty about life in a fallen world. The Christian hope is not a painless life, but God's presence within it. John 16:33 expresses this clearly: "In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."

*One danger is attributing every hardship to spiritual attack when, in fact, we may be encountering the mysterious workings of God's sovereignty. **If we always assume that God must act according to our will, we may miss His will.*** We also risk creating expectations Scripture itself does not promise. Some deeply faithful believers are healed; others are not. Faith is not a magic formula that secures a particular outcome.

True trust sounds more like this: "Lord, I know You can heal. I believe, but help my unbelief. I trust You regardless." Often, we pray to escape the fire, yet sometimes God chooses to sustain us within it. Suffering is not always evidence of failure, weakness, or insufficient faith. Sometimes suffering is the place where faith is purified of everything superficial.

Jesus Himself prayed, "Take this cup from Me," and yet He also submitted, "Not My will, but Yours be done" (Luke 22:42). At times, the thorn remains (2 Corinthians 12:7–10), and some burdens aren't taken away. God uses them. God is both the One who heals and the One who shapes through hardship.

In Luke 9, we see both realities of the gospel: Jesus heals the afflicted, but also calls His disciples to take up their cross and follow Him. Jesus came both to restore and to refine. **Even the Cross itself shows us that God's greatest work can come through what appears to be defeat.**

Scripture repeatedly calls us to this posture: "God will deliver, but even if He does not, we will still trust Him." We do not know the future, which is why sovereignty matters so deeply. *Our faith can't rest on outcomes we can't control. It has to rest in who God is.*

This doesn't mean pretending things don't hurt. It means trusting that God is still good to His children, even in discipline and hardship. When it is hard to trust in God's working hand, we can trust in His character.

Sovereignty does not remove the mystery of suffering, but it removes the fear that suffering is meaningless. If God is sovereign even when outcomes differ, then suffering cannot be meaningless. The dark night must be accomplishing something deeper in us.

III

WHAT GOD PRODUCES IN THE DARK

Introduction

The clear message I'm trying to convey here is that there are times in the Christian life that none of us would ever choose, but sooner or later, we all walk through them. I referred to this before as *the dark night of the soul*. It's that season when nothing makes sense, your prayers seem to bounce off the ceiling, and God feels a million miles away. I've been there, and I know that many of you have had dark days as well.

Feeling abandoned, David cried out to God in Psalm 22, Jonah described the belly of the fish as the pit of Sheol (2:2,6), and Jeremiah was flooded with tears day and night (9:1). These, and many more examples in the Bible, are not distant stories; they are honest pictures of what it feels like to walk through deep spiritual darkness. It hurts. Yet God uses these seasons to break us and to draw us closer to Him. It's been said, "*The depth of your humility will de-*

termine the height of your awakening.”

A.W. Tozer was right when he said, “It is doubtful whether God can bless a man greatly until He has hurt him deeply.” Sometimes it is in those very moments that we come to know Him in ways we never could have otherwise — pressure forces us to wrestle deeply with God.

The Prayer Tension

In Acts 12:5, Luke tells us that Peter was “kept in prison, but earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church.” Even before deliverance comes, Scripture shows the tension: chains on Peter’s wrists, but prayers rising to heaven. And that is often how the dark night looks. **Circumstances can feel immovable, but God is already at work in ways we cannot yet see.**

This is more than an inconvenience; it is a moment of profound uncertainty for both Peter and the church. From a human standpoint, the church appears to be losing ground. From Peter’s vantage point, his future seems to be coming to an abrupt end. If there was ever a setting that embodied what Christians have called the dark night of the soul, this would be it.

In moments like Peter’s, the struggle is not only external, but internal. The crises around us are matched by questions within us — questions about God’s presence, His purposes, and whether He is still working when life appears to be unraveling. *Yet it is precisely in such instability that Scripture redirects our gaze away from circumstances*

and back to the character and promises of God.

Scripture gives us this assurance in Isaiah 41:10:

Fear not, for I am with you;
Be not dismayed, for I am your God.
I will strengthen you,
Yes, I will help you,
I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.

Isaiah did not write this to people experiencing comfort, but to people facing exile, fear, and uncertainty as a nation. **God does not reserve His assurances for peaceful moments. Instead, He speaks them most clearly in seasons of instability.**

The dark night of the soul is a season of deep spiritual desolation, when God seems silent and the things that once strengthened us no longer carry the same weight. But it is not meaningless; God uses the darkness as a refining fire (1 Peter 1:6–7), stripping away the things we lean on so that we learn to lean on Him.

This is not merely a theological idea. It is a lived reality. Suffering is not selective. When it comes through a diagnosis, loss, disappointment, catastrophe, or unseen internal battles, we find ourselves asking, *Where are you, God? Why is this happening?*

In those moments, Job no longer feels like ancient history; he feels like a companion. **What feels like abandonment may, in fact, be the place where God is doing**

His deepest work in us. This was DEFINITELY true in my case.

The Refiner's Fire

The dark night of the soul is a battle that breaks and reshapes us. It tests every fiber of our faith. We do not choose it; it arrives uninvited, dismantling what we once trusted in, hoped for, and depended on.

The dark night appears when things feel stable, when your prayer life seems strong, and we assume that tomorrow will look like today. But then, something shifts, and we suddenly find ourselves walking through a terrain of trials we do not recognize.

It's for that exact reason that the experience can be so disorienting. Nothing outward may look dramatically different at first. We are still attending church, staying in the Word, and praying, but inwardly, things begin to feel strained and silent. The sense of God's presence that encouraged us forward now feels distant, and we begin to wonder what has changed.

In that season, one of the enemy's primary weapons is discouragement. If we remain encouraged, we can endure almost anything. But when fear takes hold and discouragement settles in, hope begins to suffocate.

Discouragement doesn't shout; it whispers. Discouragement whispers that God has stepped back; it whispers doubt. But you can silence it by "strengthening yourself in the Lord" (1 Samuel 30:6). **Focus on His courage rather**

than your discouragement. He shakes us to reshape us.

Not everyone is in a deep valley right now, and we should thank God for seasons of peace. The mountaintops are gifts. But comfort and ease are never meant to sustain our faith. **Seasons of peace refresh us, but they are not strong enough to form us.** A faith built in ease will not endure the storms of life.

Jesus Himself spoke of the house built on sand versus the one built on rock (Matthew 7:24–27). Storms have a way of revealing foundations. They do not create faith, but they reveal whether a faith has been built on a foundation that can last.

Storms Deepen Roots

Creation itself teaches that storms strengthen: *the strongest trees do not grow in calm conditions but in storms that force their roots deeper into the soil.* The same applies to us — strong faith comes from difficult seasons. Pressure strengthens what ease never could. Storms are not necessarily the enemy of the tree.

Strong winds test the roots, causing them to sink deep into the ground and hold, while storm water nourishes the tree, giving it energy to lift its branches to the sky when the clouds clear. In the same way, spiritual resistance often becomes the catalyst that deepens faith in God.

Throughout Scripture, spiritual growth is repeatedly tied to testing: “the testing of your faith produces steadfastness” (James 1:3). What feels like meaningless pain is

often God's way of building faith.

We enjoy comfort. We enjoy rest, security, and the absence of struggle. Yet spiritually, those conditions can slowly make us passive if they become our goal rather than a gift. We can be tempted to test the goodness of God by how smooth life feels, rather than by how faithfully He sustains us through both good and difficult times.

The dark night, difficult as it is, can produce something beautiful. It can: 1) Intensify intimacy with Christ, 2) Strengthen trust, 3) Build faith, 4) Develop humility, and 5) Shape true worship.

Many of the deepest worshipers have walked through profound suffering. They worship not only from knowledge in their heads but from a deeper knowledge in their hearts.

Yet, the same difficult season can also harden a person if it is resisted. It can wound trust, distort faith, and lead some to withdraw from God altogether. Many carry resentment for decades because they never allowed suffering to lead them back to Him. The difference is not the pain, but whether the pain drives us toward God or away from Him.

The Mind is the Minefield

As mentioned earlier, when I received my recent diagnosis, there was a definite turning point: I could have become withdrawn and negative; trust me, it was a struggle. Or I could choose to take my thoughts captive and focus

on thankfulness (2 Corinthians 10:5).

Most of the Old Testament prophets lamented and wept, and then they worshiped. They never remained negative. Their grief always turned toward renewed trust:

Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed,
Because His compassions fail not.
They are new every morning;
Great is Your faithfulness.
(Lamentations 3:22-23)

If it had not been the Lord who was on our side...
(Psalm 124:1)

My help comes from the Lord...
(Psalm 121:2)

We must never forget that it's not over until God says it's over. Faith often survives on one key word, "*nevertheless*." We turn from fear, frustration, and failure back toward God, choosing again to build on the only foundation that holds. We may not have all the answers in a given situation, but we return to Him. The act of turning back becomes, in itself, an act of trust. Accepting our dependence on God is what strengthens us.

False Supports

Self-pity weakens rather than strengthens us. Left unchecked, it turns our attention inward and convinces us that no one understands the burdens we are carrying. Pity parties narrow our field of vision so that all we can see is our own hurt, confusion, and questions. When we have turned so far inward, even sincere encouragement from others can feel distant.

That feeling is real, and suffering can be deeply isolating. But we must also recognize that people, even those who love us, cannot carry what only God can bear. A spouse, a friend, or a church community may care deeply, yet they are still trying to live their own lives while we are walking through pain moment by moment. They cannot enter into our suffering or bear the full weight of what we are experiencing, no matter how much they want to help.

Sometimes we find ourselves looking for compassion from others while carrying unrealistic expectations of what they can actually hold. We hope that a conversation, prayer, or act of kindness will alleviate the heaviness of the dark night. But when it doesn't help, we can turn from disappointment to resentment. *This isn't because people intentionally fail us, but because we ask them to do what only God can do.*

Those in ministry often feel this tension acutely. When you allow all your burdens to press in at once, it can become overwhelming. That weight is one of the hidden stresses of caring for others. As the family of God, we are

called to walk closely with our hurting brothers and sisters. But without careful dependence on God, that weight can become unbearable.

We sometimes say, “The church has let me down,” or “People have failed me.” Leaders will fail. Communities will fall short. **Every human support system eventually reveals its limits.** Yet even that disappointment can serve a purpose if it drives us closer to the One who never fails. God is present in these moments. What feels like abandonment from friends and institutions may actually be God’s redirection. Here God strips away lesser supports so that our trust settles completely on Him.

This act of taking away is not His cruelty; it is His loving mercy. Hebrews reminds us that the Lord disciplines those He loves (Hebrews 12:6). God does not remove lesser supports in order to harm us, but to re-anchor us in what cannot be taken away.

The goal is not to deny pain but to refuse to live inside it. Acknowledging pain is healthy, but enthroning it is destructive. We must let go of the posture that keeps us stuck and allow suffering to redirect us toward dependence on God rather than resentment toward others. The dark night is not meant to trap us in isolation, but to lead us to God and into a deeper reliance on His presence and grace.

Sovereignty Reminder

The central truth we must hold onto during our dark

night of the soul is that God is in control. Nothing happens outside of His sovereignty. Even in Job's story, suffering did not occur apart from God's awareness. *That does not make suffering easy, but it does remind us that suffering is not meaningless.* **Every moment of pain is redeemed; not one second is wasted.**

Paul writes that God works "all things together for good for those who love Him" (Romans 8:28). That does not mean our pain and suffering are good, but it does mean that none of it is outside His ability to weave into His sovereign purposes. The dark night never operates outside divine oversight. And if we are honest, we might pray never to be tested that way, because we know how quickly comfort can allow pride to settle in.

But what do we do when God does not deliver, heal, or fix things the way we hoped? At first, we may feel confident that He will act as we expect. Then reality unfolds differently, and we are forced to confront the fact that God does not always follow our plans. Here, our faith moves from theory to lived trust. Faith is no longer about what we believe God can do, but whether we trust Him when He chooses to act differently than we asked.

This is the movement we see in the Psalms again and again — honest lament followed by renewed trust, as seen in Psalm 13:

1 How long, O Lord? Will You forget me forever?
How long will You hide Your face from me?

What God Produces in the Dark

2 How long shall I take counsel in my soul,
Having sorrow in my heart daily?
How long will my enemy be exalted over me?

5 But I have trusted in Your mercy;
My heart shall rejoice in Your salvation.

6 I will sing to the Lord,
Because He has dealt bountifully with me.

Pain breaks us, but God rebuilds us.

Explanation vs Formation

Often, we want explanations so we can manage or fix what is happening. We ask “why” because we long for control, but the better questions may be: “What are You teaching me? How are You forming me? Where are You drawing me closer to Yourself?” This is the shift from explanation to formation, and it is often where spiritual growth begins.

We rarely get a full explanation for our suffering. Instead, we are invited to trust that nothing reaches us without first passing through God’s hands. In the hands of God, even loss, confusion, or unanswered prayer can become occasions through which He draws us back to Himself. What can feel like an interruption in life may actually be an invitation to a purer spiritual life.

This perspective does not remove grief or fear, but it can prevent us from being consumed by analysis or anx-

ity. We bring those questions to God, and we don't let them steal our peace. With this understanding, we continue to walk in faith, even when we don't understand. We can trust that clarity often comes later, but God's presence is available now.

The Blessing of Brokenness

Here is the hope we often miss: **The same seasons that feel like collapse are often the very places where God begins renewal.** What can feel like an ending is *actually the beginning of a miraculous work of God that we would not have recognized. God never wastes suffering; He repurposes it.*

We hear talk about revival — people say, “Revival is here!” But revival is not created by personalities, platforms, or events. Those may gather crowds, but they cannot manufacture awakening. Revival begins when ordinary believers, brought to the end of themselves, begin to seek God with urgency and humility. It begins when people cry out, “We will not let go until we find You. We will seek You with all our heart.” Revival is less about excitement and more about surrender, both individual and corporate. It is less about spiritual momentum and more about repentance.

Often, that kind of hunger is only born in darkness. **Historically, seasons of spiritual awakening have not emerged from comfort, but from crisis.** The great revivals in Wales, the New Hebrides, and those during the First

Great Awakening all followed periods of hardship and spiritual decline. Difficulty drove people to their knees, and desperation stripped them of self-sufficiency.

What unifies all of those movements is not a method but a posture of the heart. They were marked by confession of sin, renewed prayer, a restored reverence for the Word, and lives reordered around holiness.

This is why we must be careful not to rush people out of painful seasons too quickly, or they may miss the blessing of brokenness. There are times when what feels like breaking is actually God's preparation. He wounds in order to heal more deeply. He strips away what we relied on so that we learn to rely on Him. If we escape a situation too soon, we might miss the transformation it was meant to produce in us.

I once watched this unfold as someone knelt weeping at the altar. Well-meaning people wanted to intervene, but it was clear that God Himself was at work. There comes a moment when human words are unnecessary because the Spirit is already doing what no person can accomplish. In those moments, our silence can be more faithful to the work of God than well-intentioned advice. Waiting for God to move can be more loving for our neighbor than trying to fix everything right away.

Awakening, Not Abandonment

What feels like abandonment can actually be an awakening.

Disruptions, then, are not meaningless interruptions — they become invitations, moments that call us to examine, repent, and return. Scripture reminds us that God disciplines those He loves, not to destroy but to restore (Hebrews 12:6). And what He most desires to restore is not comfort but intimacy. **Relief may come, but intimacy is always God's deeper goal.** He is not merely trying to change our situation; He is drawing us back into closer fellowship.

Our relationship with God becomes the only stable center when everything else shifts. We learn to anchor our trust not in circumstances, achievements, or security, but in the Shepherd who leads — even when we do not yet understand where He is taking us. *The journey is often unclear, but our Guide is always trustworthy.*

Dependence grows where self-reliance once lived. God fills what suffering empties. Those who have passed through such seasons often find that their faith has changed. Worship carries weight. Hope is no longer theoretical. Trust has been tested and proven. Those believers speak differently about God because they have not only met Him in blessing but also in need. They have been purified in the flame of trials.

The dark night, then, is not only a battle; it is also a place of formation. It breaks what is false, rebuilds what is true, and teaches the soul to rest in God alone. A journey that begins in loss becomes, by God's grace, a deeper kind of spiritual life.

Presence in the Fire

There comes a point in suffering when endurance itself becomes evidence that God is still at work. **The deeper the pain, the deeper the dependence we are invited into.** Those who walk closely with Christ are rarely strangers to hardship; more often, their intimacy has been forged through it. What appears from the outside like weakness is often the place where spiritual strength is being formed. God is doing more than granting us relief in hard times; He is teaching us how to remain in Him.

We naturally want to avoid pain, to go around it if possible. When life becomes difficult, everything in us looks for an exit, a solution, or a way to fix what is broken so that everything can return to normal. Yet Scripture repeatedly shows God meeting His people within their suffering, not outside of it. **He does not abandon His children in the fire; He joins them there.**

In Daniel 3:23–25, Daniel writes about that incredible moment where Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego are thrown into the fiery furnace by King Nebuchadnezzar:

And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished; and he rose in haste and spoke, saying to his counselors, “Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?” They

answered and said to the king, “True, O king.” “Look!” He answered, “I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.”

God does not always extinguish the flames; sometimes He reveals His presence within them. The three men also said something amazing before they were thrown into the fire that we must never forget. Paraphrasing Daniel 3:17-18, they essentially told the king, “God is able to deliver us from the fire, but even if He doesn’t, we will not serve you.”

When All Else Fails

We too must trust Him, regardless of the outcome. When all else fails, worship. Not because worship makes pain disappear, but because it reorients the heart. When everything feels unstable, worship reminds us who God is. He is our loving Lord, even in the midst of our circumstances.

Worship is not separate from prayer; it is prayer in its most surrendered form. *It is the heart reaching toward God when words are no longer sufficient.* Sometimes that prayer is spoken. Sometimes it is nothing more than grief laid before Him. Worship can be tears, silence, or the simple decision to remain in God’s presence when it is tempting to withdraw into isolated grief.

Throughout Scripture, we see this response repeated. In Mark 7, a desperate mother came to Jesus seeking help for her child, and before receiving an answer, she worshiped. Job, stripped of everything, fell to the ground and worshiped God. The words we often quote so easily were first spoken in unimaginable loss: “The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord” (Job 1:20). These biblical examples show us that worship is not always a response of celebration, but an act of surrender — even before God answers the prayer.

Jairus faced the crushing report of his daughter’s death, yet Christ called him to trust (Mark 5:22–24, 35–42). Even Jesus Himself entered suffering fully, crying out from the Cross before triumphing over death. He knows both anguish and victory. There is no depth of sorrow that a believer can experience that Christ has not already walked through Himself.

Because of that, the believer can say with the prophet, “When I sit in darkness, the Lord will be my light” (Micah 7:8). God is not doing less in the dark times in our lives — He is doing more. He is sustaining us, forming us, drawing us nearer to Him than ever before.

If God is working even in the darkness, then the question is not whether He is present, but how we should respond to Him there.

IV

IN CASE OF EMERGENCY — BREAK PRAYER

Introduction

Sooner or later, every believer faces a situation that lies outside of their control. No strategy works. No connection helps. No amount of effort changes the outcome. It is in those moments that our theology becomes very practical. Do we really trust that God is sovereign, or do we only say we do? **When a crisis hits, what comes first — prayer, or control?**

The tension in Acts 12 is palpable. Peter is in prison: “But constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church” (Acts 12:5). While Peter sits in prison, the church prays. They do not know the outcome. They do not control the situation. But they refuse to do nothing.

This is where the passage confronts us more than we might expect. We prefer situations we can analyze and influence. We want scenarios with obvious solutions and measurable progress. But Acts 12 does not give us that.

There is no plan to free Peter, and no negotiation attempts with Herod for his release. The church, in an earthly sense, is totally powerless to help their pastor. The church is placed in the uncomfortable position of having no control at all.

Their only action is prayer — not because it is a last resort, but because it is the only honest response left when human ability has reached its limit. *When life is out of our control, the believer's response is not panic, but persistent prayer rooted in trust in God's sovereignty.*

Prayer Is Not an Emergency Tool

In Case of Emergency, Break This, is a memorable title of a sermon I recently gave, but it can also be misleading. Prayer is not something we reach for only when life collapses. It is meant to be the steady heartbeat of the Christian life. E. M. Bounds wrote, “When faith ceases to pray, faith ceases to live.” Prayer is not a spiritual accessory; it is our lifeline in a world of sorrow and trouble.

The word *constant* matters in this period of church history in the book of Acts, and it matters now. Scripture does not describe prayer as casual reflection or spiritual daydreaming. It speaks of prayer as wrestling, striving, and fervency. Prayer is spiritual resistance. It is a battle against distraction, against the flesh, and against anything that would pull us away from communion with God.

Prayer in Scripture is rarely presented as a single act that can be quickly moved on from. Scripture presents

prayer as a posture of life. The church in Acts 12 did not pause occasionally to pray; instead, they lived prayerfully because they knew they were always before God. **If sovereignty means that God rules every hour, then prayer cannot simply be an escape hatch used during emergencies.** Living before the face of God means constantly acknowledging that every moment already belongs to Him.

Why Prayer Feels Difficult

Part of the difficulty of prayer is that it confronts our human impulse for independence. So often, we choose to solve our own problems and rely on our own strength. Prayer disrupts that instinct. It forces us to admit our need and to wait on God rather than act on our own timeline. In this way, prayer is resistance — not only against spiritual opposition, but against our own self-sufficiency.

It is not simply setting aside a few quiet minutes; it is pressing through spiritual resistance. And yet, on the other side of that resistance is breakthrough. When we push past the reluctance of the flesh and seek God anyway, something changes. Prayer becomes less like an obligation and more like inhaling. Prayer feels necessary, sustaining, and life-giving.

“Praying continually” sounds like becoming more religious. But in actuality, it is simply becoming more honest with God and ourselves. We are dependent creatures, whether we admit it or not. Everything in life, and

even life itself, is given, not achieved. Prayer simply brings our awareness into alignment with that reality. It is less about persuading God to act and more about remembering who God is despite life's circumstances.

But there are things that stifle prayer: sin, pride, bitterness, a critical spirit, and so on. These things harden the heart and distance us from the prayer closet. A sick heart avoids communion with God. **Matthew Henry wrote, “Apostasy begins at the closet door.”** The invitation, then, is not to wait for a crisis, or to wait for you to drift away from God, but to cultivate a life of constant pursuit *now*.

If the world were governed by chance, then prayer would be nothing but a useless, cathartic practice. But we know that the world is ruled by a personal, sovereign God. Constant prayer, then, is the most rational response to this wonderful reality. The church in Acts prays constantly because they believe God is constantly present, constantly active, and constantly able. Their persistence is not anxiety — it is trust lived out over time.

What Actually Kills a Prayer Life

When the heart begins to drift, you can feel it. Cynicism replaces tenderness. Patience shortens. Joy fades. You feel unsettled, easily irritated, spiritually dry. When a Christian loses their prayer life, something vital is lost. The spiritual energy that once kept them grounded, alive, and filled with joy is now noticeably absent.

It rarely happens all at once. No one intentionally

sets out to abandon their intimacy with God. **Just like a knife that is never sharpened, the dulling of a prayer life begins quietly with complacency and compromise.** Prayers are short and insincere. Scripture reading feels mechanical. We pack our schedules full of “doing” things instead of finding time to abide in Christ. Life from the outside can look exactly the same. The loss is inward, and there is a growing distance in our hearts.

But this can be restored. You can return by simply saying, “Lord, I need that back,” and then step out in faith and begin to obey Him. E. M. Bounds observed, “Men would pray better if they lived better.” The reverse is also true: we live better when we pray better. The two cannot be separated.

One of the greatest hindrances to prayer is not busyness, but misdirected love. It’s easy to blame busy schedules, legitimate responsibilities, or even exhaustion. But those things are rarely the root of the issue. The deeper question is: what has captured my heart away from God? A truth of the heart is that whatever we love the most will receive our attention. As fallen humans, we are desperate to give our energy, time, and imagination to what we most love. So prayer weakens, not because we lack the time to devote to it, but because we have become infatuated with something else.

Prayer is not about developing rigid or Pharisaical holiness; it is about valuing communion with God enough to turn away from what dulls it. This is why we see Scrip-

ture connect holiness and prayer. They are not rules to keep, but relationships to guard. Sin is not as simple as breaking rules; over time, it can numb our affections. It can clutter our hearts, making it hard to hear the calling of the Spirit. Holiness is not about earning God's presence, but about refusing anything that would make us content to live far from God's presence.

As the heart begins to seek God again, desires begin to change. **Prayer shifts from asking God to support our plans to asking Him to shape them.** Over time, the tone of our prayers can begin to change. There is less urgency to explain ourselves to God and more willingness to listen. *Instead of negotiating or manipulating outcomes, we begin to ask for wisdom, endurance, and clarity.* The prayer that once felt like a spiritual discipline begins to feel like relief. The heart remembers that prayer is not a heavy yoke but a place where we can lay our own burdens down.

We may begin praying for a particular outcome, only to find ourselves saying, "Lord, what do You want?" Alignment replaces insistence. Communion with God begins to loosen our grip on control. This framework helps us understand why the church in Acts responded the way it did. The church was not turning to prayer as a last resort because prayer was already an established pattern in their lives. **The crisis simply revealed where their trust had been all along.**

Learning to Rest in Sovereignty

Meanwhile, Herod is preparing to bring Peter out to kill him. In the face of death, what is Peter doing the night before his execution? He is sleeping. Chained between two soldiers, guarded at the door, awaiting what should have been a brutal death, Peter rests. The text does not explain why, but it is hard to miss what this reveals: Peter trusts the sovereignty of God. His life is not in the hands of Herod; his life is in the hands of God.

Peace is not found in changed circumstances, but in acceptance of who is actually in control. This type of dependent trust is where true peace is found. We often search for peace by trying to fix what is around us, such as our work, finances, and relationships. **However, peace anchored to circumstances will always shift when circumstances shift.**

Resting in God's sovereignty is simple to say and difficult to embody. It is a daily decision to take fearful thoughts captive and return again to trust: "Lord, I may not understand, but I trust what You are doing."

We may not like what He allows, but we learn to trust what He ordains.

Even in the darkest prison, there is light — the light of God's presence that suffering cannot extinguish. Horatio Spafford, who lost his daughters at sea, could still write, "It Is Well with My Soul" because his hope was not rooted in outcomes but in the character of God.

Sometimes God slows us down through hardship in

order to draw us back to Himself. A crisis interrupts our momentum, exposes misplaced trust, and redirects our pursuit. **Activity cannot outrun intimacy.** When busyness moves ahead of communion with God, the soul begins to starve. But when intimacy remains first, even suffering becomes a place where trust deepens.

How God Forms Trust Through Waiting

Our intimacy with God must remain our main pursuit. Everything else flows from that.

In Acts 12, the angel comes to Peter, strikes him on the side, and wakes him: “Get up quickly” (Acts 12:7, ESV). The chains fall from his hands and Peter follows, still unsure whether this is real or not. You can almost feel his disorientation — suddenly awake, trying to make sense of what is happening as he is led step by step out of the prison.

Scripture often shows this same urgency when God intervenes. In Genesis 19:15, the angels told Lot to flee Sodom quickly. Do not linger. God’s will frequently calls not only for belief, but for movement. Here is the lesson: delay can be dangerous. What if Lot had hesitated because leaving was uncomfortable? What if Peter had refused to move, convincing himself this could not be real? Obedience sometimes requires immediate action.

This is not a call to recklessness. When direction is unclear, we pray, “Lord, is this You?” Waiting can be wise. **But when God has already made something plain and**

we resist it, hesitation becomes disobedience.

Sometimes that obedience looks like reconciliation, repentance, breaking a bad habit, stepping into a calling, or addressing what we already know God has asked of us. Scripture repeatedly warns three times in Hebrews, “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your heart.” For example, if you know you need to break off a wrong relationship, give up a harmful addiction, or repent of a critical heart, take that step today and deal with it.

Peter passes the first guard, then the second. The iron gate opens by itself. He walks into the street — and suddenly the angel is gone. And Peter is left standing there, wondering what to do next. There are seasons when God leads very closely. God is guiding us, confirming us, making each step unmistakable. And then there are other seasons when He steps back and calls us to walk by faith.

It’s like when I taught my children to walk. At first, I held their hands and steadied their every movement. Eventually I let go, not to abandon them, but so they could grow. God often works the same way. As we mature, He invites deeper trust.

God may feel distant, yet those are the very places where faith takes root. **Deep trust is rarely formed in ease; it is forged through hardship, confusion, and waiting.** Strong roots grow deep. *It may seem as though God is less near, but He is no less present.* Feelings are not the measure of faith. Faith is proven in the storm. An anchor is not tested in calm water; it is tested when the wind rises.

If it holds, the boat stands. If it does not, the boat drifts. So it is with faith.

Acts tells us, “Peter came to himself” (Acts 12:11, ESV). There are moments, even for believers, when we must do the same. We recognize how far we have drifted, how bitterness or distraction has crept in, and we return. Jesus used this language in the story of the prodigal son. Sitting among the pigs, he “came to himself” and realized he did not belong there.

Christians can experience this calling back too. Complacency creeps into our lives quietly. Our devotion weakens, worship becomes optional, and spiritual hunger fades. The danger is not the struggle — the danger is ignoring it.

One of the clearest signs of drift is the loss of joy. The Christian life begins to feel heavy instead of life-giving. Gratitude fades. Irritation grows. The soul feels tired and unsettled, even when nothing outward has changed. What is missing is not activity but communion with God.

Throughout the Old Testament, this pattern repeats. God remains faithful, but His people drift. Blessing leads to comfort. Comfort leads to forgetfulness. Prosperity, if not guarded by humility, becomes a spiritual liability.

Hardship often forms resilience, which is why earlier generations marked by suffering displayed such strength. Comfort, by contrast, can produce complacency if we are not careful. And complacency rarely remains alone. Ungodly influence follows. **What we once resisted, we**

begin to tolerate. Israel followed this same progression, reassured by false prophets proclaiming peace while their hearts turned away from God.

In the days of Jeremiah, the people had grown comfortable while their hearts drifted from God. False prophets reassured them, saying, “Peace, peace,” even though judgment was near. Their confidence was not rooted in obedience but in pride, and the warnings of the true prophets were ignored.

The pattern is sobering: complacency → wrong influence → apathy → pride.

Pride then convinces us we no longer need to repent, and it blinds us to our own condition. But Peter “came to himself” and said, “Now I know for certain that the Lord has sent his angel.” The reality of deliverance settled in. He stood free, rescued from what everyone assumed would be his death.

The Church’s Example of Persistent Prayer

When Peter finally arrives at the house of Mary, believers are gathered there doing the only thing they can do: praying.

Rhoda hears Peter’s voice and, in her excitement, forgets to open the door. Instead, she runs back to tell the others. They cannot believe it. Even those who had been praying struggle to accept that God has answered.

Meanwhile, Peter keeps knocking. The scene is almost humorous, yet it reveals something deeply human. Prayer

is not about perfect faith or flawless understanding; it is about persistence. **Jesus taught, “Ask... seek... knock” — not because God needs information, but because we need transformation.** Prayer aligns us with God’s will, deepens our dependence, and reshapes our desires.

The early church did not treat prayer as a last resort. It was their first response. They had no influence, no leverage, and no control over events — only the conviction that God hears.

Jesus’ words in Matthew 6:33 illuminate this posture: “Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.” When seeking God becomes primary, prayer ceases to be a task; it becomes communion. Scripture must be lived, not merely heard. Knowledge alone does not produce growth; obedience does. As we order our lives around pursuing God, prayer itself begins to change. We find ourselves desiring not merely answers, but His presence.

This is why constant pursuit is always rewarded. The answer may not come as we expect, but we discover something greater — we find Christ Himself. The soul that longs for God, like the psalmist’s deer longing for water, is ultimately satisfied not by outcomes but by nearness.

The Path Ahead Must be Steady and Straight

The praying church in Acts 12 reminds us that faith is sustained not by dramatic moments, but by steady seeking. Peter eventually enters the house, and the room that was

once full of concerned prayer is now filled with astonishment. God had acted, and the impossible had happened. The lesson here is not simply that Peter was miraculously delivered, but that the church prayed before they knew the outcome. **The faith of the church was not rooted in control, but in trusting the God who rules over them.**

Sometimes prayers are answered in the way we ask; sometimes they are not. James had already been unjustly executed, and the church knew Peter might also face the same fate. Yet this did not deter them from prayer. Their confidence was not in a particular outcome, but in the character of God.

Prayer does not place God under an obligation; it positions our hearts in dependence. Prayer has a way of bringing our fears to the surface, making us honest, and humbling us before the God who holds all things together. And as we pray, something happens to us. Our hearts begin to change, and our grip loosens. The once unbearable weight becomes something we can give to God.

This short story in Acts ends with Peter free to proclaim the gospel another day, but the real victory had already begun long before his prison chains fell off. It began with a small but faithful group of believers who chose to pray even when they had no power against the powers of the world.

This invitation remains for us today as well. When the night is long and the future is uncertain, we do what the early church did. We choose to seek God. We trust in His

sovereign plan. And we keep praying — regardless of the outcome. *Stay the course regardless of circumstances.*

Follow the Light to extinguish the dark.

EPILOGUE

THE DAWN

For the believer, darkness is temporary. The battle with the dark night may feel long and unbearable, but we can rest assured that it is never ultimate. Scripture points us beyond the present painful moment to the future secured by Christ Himself. The Cross looked like defeat before it became victory. The tomb looked final before it was found to be empty.

Resurrection is God's response to the apparent ending. What looks final is never beyond His power to redeem. Philippians 1:6 says, "being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ..." **Time and time again, God demonstrates that what appears to be the end of something is actually only the beginning.**

For those apart from Christ, it is not the beginning but the end. That is why Scripture speaks so urgently about eternity — not to frighten, but to call us to respond. The

Christian hope is not rooted in changing circumstances, but in the certainty that God is present and that He will finish the good work He has begun. The dark night is not a sign of abandonment but an indicator of the transformative work ahead. God is leading us to a depth of faith that we would never choose on our own.

Each person must decide whether to resist God or surrender to Him. Many of us can look back and see how stubbornness or pride kept us from trusting Him fully. Yet the invitation remains open: To repent, to believe, and to entrust our lives completely to Christ. He is not only the Savior who meets us at the end of our rope; He is the Shepherd who walks with us through every dark valley.

That is the hope held out even in the darkest night. **The *dark night of the soul* is not meaningless suffering; it painfully removes what cannot sustain us and teaches us to cling to the One who can.** It leads us to the discovery that God is not doing less in the dark time — He is doing more. He is sustaining us, forming us, drawing us nearer to Him than ever before.

Paul reminds us in 2 Corinthians 4:16–18:

Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do

Epilogue

not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

Because of this hope, we can continue to walk with Him — not because we understand everything, but because we trust the One who leads us.

In closing, I recently came across this statement. I'm not sure who the author is, but their words are profound:

“Sometimes the very places that feel like they're breaking you are the places God is using to produce something deeper in you — faith that is stronger, character that is refined, and dependence on Him that is real. Don't despise the crushing. God often brings His richest oil from the places we thought would destroy us.”

This dark night will not last forever. **The same God who is with us in the dark is already preparing the dawn.**

The Dark Night of the Soul

Epilogue

More by Shane Idleman

*Oh God, Would You Rend the Heavens?
Understanding and Contending for a Genuine
Spiritual Awakening*

*I Almost Quit
My Journey of Leading Through the Landmines of Ministry*

*40 Days to Reset Your Life
Applying God's Wisdom for Physical and Spiritual Renewal*

*If My People
In Case of National Emergency, Read This*

*Help I'm Addicted
Overcoming the Cravings that Overcome You*

*Feasting and Fasting
What Works, What Doesn't, and Why*

One Nation 'Above' God

*Desperate For More of God
The Heart Cry of Every Believer*

*Answers for a Confused Church
Times Change — Truth Does Not*

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*What Works for Men
Regaining Lost Ground*

*What Works for Singles
For Relationships, for Marriage, for Life*

*What Works When “Diets” Don’t
Find Out What Works, What Doesn’t, and Why ... While Staying
Focused on the Goal, Not the Challenge!*

*What Works for Young Adults
Solid Choices for Unstable Times*

A Calculated Assault Against Cancer