

## OKOTOKS EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH

WHEN DARKNESS RAINS

THE CRY OF DESPAIR

FEBRUARY 7-13, 2016



### MAIN POINT

Trust begins with knowing where your salvation comes from, so continue to cry out to the God of your salvation and cling to Him.

### THINKING THINGS THROUGH

Connect the sermon to the study.

**1. Think about a time when you found yourself in a despairing or hopeless situation. How did you decide who to turn to for counsel or compassion during that season?**

**2. Do you have people to talk to when darkness or despair rains down on us?**

**Leader:** No one wants to be at rock bottom, yet sometimes we end up there, at the end of ourselves with no where to turn. In those moments it is easy to feel hopeless and as though there is no one to help. The Bible is honest about the human experience and contains many Psalms of lament that validate our sunken and weary feelings. But underneath the veneer of despair, the Bible provides a solid foundation of hope in the God of our salvation. When we have no one to cry out to, we can always cry out to Him.

### DIGGING DEEPER

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 2 CORINTHIANS 4:7-14.

**3. No one wants to feel hopeless, but why is brokenness as Christians actually a good thing according to verse 7? In difficult circumstances, where does Paul turn for hope?**

**Leader:** Paul's metaphor of the jars of clay is meant to show how the greatness of the treasure outshines the greatness of the messenger. We are all broken, weak, and frail people, but the power of the gospel transforms our lives. This doesn't mean we never feel hopeless; it means our weaknesses and times of despair actually help people to see the God of our salvation (Ps. 88:1) working in and through us. To put it another way, brokenness reminds us and those around us of the great value of Jesus.

**4. Have you ever found yourself in a situation like the one Paul described in verses 8-9? If so, share about that time. What did you learn about God and your relationship with Him through that season?**

5. Paul believed that God would see His children through whatever suffering they faced, and that as a result, they need not lose heart. How have you seen this to be true in your own life?

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 2 CORINTHIANS 4:15-18.

---

6. According to verse 15, what is the result of brokenness in the lives of God's people? How should this change the way we view brokenness and the way we speak about it with others?

7. What are the promises for God's people in these verses? How do these promises help guard us from the temptation to lose heart as we live for Christ every day?

8. What are the afflictions of this life preparing us for (v. 17)? Why should this cause us to cry out to the Lord even more?

**Leader:** Paul reminds us that, although we may be broken, those hopeless situations are granted for our good. God uses these breaking circumstances to bring Himself glory and mold us into His image. Ultimately, brokenness is the means of transformation in the hands of God. Jesus suffered more than any person who has ever lived, and in the moment of His most extreme suffering, He cried out to God by quoting Psalm 22: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46). Because Jesus suffered, He identifies with us in our hopelessness and despair. He has felt those feelings (Heb. 2:18). When you cry to the God of your salvation, He understands you and helps you.

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ PSALM 73:21-28.

---

9. How do these verses relate to the teaching of Paul in 2 Corinthians 4?

10. What important truths about God did the psalmist affirm? How do these speak directly to our despair?

**Leader:** The psalmist asked a rhetorical question, "Whom have I in heaven but you?" The understood answer was no one, which was true for the psalmist and remains true for us. No one is better to turn to than God. Our heart and our flesh are temporary and weak, but God is from everlasting to everlasting, and He is not incumbered with the same kind of weakness we are. God is our portion forever, so there is never a time when we should not feel confident to turn to the God of our salvation.

### DOING LIFE TOGETHER

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

11. In Psalm 73:25, the psalmist acknowledged he had no one to turn to other than God. What are some ways we can remind ourselves and each other of this truth on a regular basis? How could this help you when darkness rains?
12. What do you need to cry out to God for today? How can we encourage one another to turn to God in our hopelessness and despair?
13. When Jesus suffered on the cross He cried out to God using Scripture from the Psalms. What would it look like for you to do the same thing? Has anyone ever done this before? What impact did it have on you in your time of despair?

**Leader:** Close your group time by reading through Psalm 73:21-28. Read it aloud slowly one time, then pause and give your group members time to reflect on the truths in this psalm. Then read it aloud again as you cry out to God together.

### PRAYER

Praise God for being able to turn to Him in love and trust. Thank Him for being ever present and always good to us. Pray for those in our church who are feeling hopeless, and ask God to comfort them and encourage them to turn to Him in faith.

### MEMORIZE

So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. 2 Corinthians 4:18

**SPOTLIGHT ON THE PASSAGE**

**2 CORINTHIANS 4:7-18**

---

4:7. Treasure is the unfading glory that accompanies the new covenant (3:8). The power to bring this about lies only with God. Clay jars is a metaphor for fragile and mortal human bodies. Sometimes the more humble the container, the more glorious its precious contents appear.

4:8-9. These verses contain four pairs of opposites. The first element of each pair characterizes frail humanity, especially humans in service to God. The second element gives evidence of God's power.

4:10-11. In His humanity Jesus was subject to death; by God's power He was raised to resurrection life. Paul (and indeed all the saints) would follow Jesus' example, although for Paul the resurrection life had already been revealed in our mortal flesh. See Eph 2:4-6, where believers are already made alive, raised, and seated with Christ.

4:12. Paul's trials as a minister led ultimately to his experiencing a martyr's bodily death; however, his trials were instrumental in bringing spiritual life to the Corinthians.

4:13. The Hebrew text of Ps 116:10 is, "I believed, even when I said, 'I am severely afflicted.'" Paul quoted the Septuagint (Gk version). The main point is that trust in the Lord motivates a person to action.

4:14. At Christ's coming, God will raise believers. This must be distinguished from the new spiritual life that Paul enjoyed while still in bodily life (vv. 10-11). The words us with you show that the resurrection of the saints is not individualistic. See 11:2 for the other instance of the verb present in 2 Corinthians, which also emphasizes the corporate nature of the church (as a bride).

4:16. The words we do not give up are repeated from verse 1. Between these two statements Paul explains why he was not defeated even in extremely negative circumstances. The apostle is the ideal for all believers.

4:17-18. These verses contain three pairs of opposites. These also contrast the experiences of frail humanity with the evidences of God's power.

**PSALM 73:25-26**

---

73:21-22 The psalmist's bitterness apparently blinded him and made him stupid like an animal (92:6).

73:23 Holding someone's right hand is used in some contexts to refer to honor (Isa 45:1). Here it refers to protection (Ps 63:8; Isa 41:10,13; 42:6; Jer 31:32).

73:24 Some argue that take me up in glory refers to being honored (similar to the image of the "right hand" in v. 23). However, there is no good reason to doubt that this could refer to life after death. The OT does not develop a thorough or consistent concept of life after death, but the afterlife could have been a belief in Israel, as it was among the other nations (Gen 5:24).

73:26 Flesh and heart probably refers to earthly existence, and they reinforce the idea of life after death from verse 24. A portion is another way of describing a person's inheritance (see note at 16:5-6).

73:28 The presence of Yahweh is the ultimate hope of those who trust Him (15:1; 21:6-7).