

Welcome to the Darkroom - Genesis 39:20-23 - Skip Heitzig

[MUSIC PLAYING]

Welcome to Calvary Church, with Skip Heitzig. We're so glad you've joined us for Darkroom. In this teaching series, Pastor Skip shows how God often develops his children through hardship, the dark times in life. Here's Pastor Skip.

Would you turn in your Bibles this morning to the Book of Genesis, the first book in the Bible, Genesis chapter 39. We're beginning a new series called Darkroom And this is a message I'm calling Welcome to the Darkroom. Today, most photographs how in the world are taken on this, a little pocket device, your phone. This is all relatively new. For that matter, photography is relatively new.

Americans take most photographs. If you were to look at it country by country, people group by people group, Americans take more photographs on their phone than any other people, for some reason. The average American takes 20 pictures per day on this, 20.2-- to be exact-- photographs on their phone. Every two minutes, every two minutes, we take more pictures than all of humanity took in the 1800s, in the entire century. We do that every two minutes.

And we do it with a phone, principally. But this is a camera. This is a real camera. These are real cameras. These are cameras that I've had for years I've traveled the world with and photographed with. And they use something-- and you have to explain this to newer generations. They use something called film.

[LAUGHTER]

And this is a roll of film for this particular camera. And then I also have a contact sheet and negatives all developed in a darkroom that I used to have. I spent years in a darkroom. You're saying, you spent years in dark rooms? That explains a lot.

[LAUGHTER]

But I did. I had a darkroom when I was a little kid. I had access to one. My brother had one. My first apartment, I built a little darkroom. In my parents' house before that, there was the darkroom. And just about every place since that I've been, I've had access to film photography and darkroom. So the way film works is that you load it into the camera. It is basically made out of emulsion.

And on the emulsion-- in this particular instance, on the emulsion is a little substance of silver halide crystals. And silver halide is sensitive to light. So when you organize the light through a lens, and the shutter opens and closes, and the light comes in and strikes the emulsion, the silver halide on that emulsion gets what they call "excited." And it actually burns an image that you cannot see into the film. It's called a latent image.

Then when you put this emulsion-filled film into a bath of chemicals, a developer, it takes the silver halide and transforms it into metallic silver so that the areas of the emulsion that are most exposed by light turn black, because the chemicals clumped together. And the parts that were least exposed are clear or white. So it's an exact negative. So when you take a photograph on this kind of film, you have a negative.

You take the negative into a darkroom, put it in a device called an enlarger, and you expose it on a piece of paper. And that becomes a positive. So that which is positive comes from that, which is negative. And so we're going through a series, Darkroom, how the negatives in your life, how God turns them into positives.

Now, in the old days, when you had these hefty things called cameras, you would wind it up, you'd take the picture, and you didn't know what it looked like. Because you didn't have a screen on the back where you could, like, oh, I like that, OK good, or, I'll take another one. So you had to take the picture--

[CLICK]

--and then you had to wait four days or weeks, right? You'd send the film in. You'd drop the film off, you'd send it in, you'd pick it up, and then you'd see if it was good or not. Well, if you're a wedding photographer, you're doing this for, like, two weeks or you're, like, I hope, man, because that's my job on the line. You got to make sure that those pictures are good.

So you took the picture. You didn't see it, but you had to trust the chemistry. You had to trust the darkroom. You trusted the process that the professionals went through in the darkroom to produce that picture. But in fact, many

photographers saw the darkroom as the place where art was created, not the camera as much, not the film as much. But once it gets in the darkroom, that's where the art begins. Somebody who was very famous for doing that is a photographer I'm guessing some of you have heard of called Ansel Adams. Ever hear of Ansel Adams? Took a lot of black and white pictures.

Ansel Adams was a master at going into the darkroom, manipulating chemistry, manipulating ISO ratings-- or ASA ratings they were called in those days-- manipulating exposure times, dodging and burning the photograph-- having some parts more exposed and less exposed. He came up with what was called the zone system, where the photographs he produced had this incredible dynamic range of perfect exposure, from the darkest part of the picture to the lightest part of the picture. So the next time you look at an Ansel Adams photograph and you go, man, that's stunning, remember, it's because of what he did in the dark. The mastery was done in the dark.

In fact, this photograph of Ansel Adams, the grand Teton Mountains. Isn't that beautiful? It doesn't even do it justice looking at it on this screen, with the Snake River. This photograph, the original photograph, just sold at auction in 2020 for \$988,000, a black and white picture for almost \$1 million. Why? Because this is the work of a master who manipulated scenes in the dark. I think where I'm heading with this.

You've been in the darkroom. You've been in God's darkroom. You have experiences in your life that are dark, unexplainable to you. You don't know why you went through them, very, very painful, hard times of affliction. Well, you're in the right place. You're in good company, because the Bible itself is a darkroom. In fact, one of the great themes of the scripture is the theme of suffering. In almost every book of the Bible, suffering is one of the principal themes. And you should know that the Bible never skirts the issue of pain, and suffering, and dark times. It meets it head-on. It deals with it head-on.

So when you turn to the Book of Genesis, it begins by an account of how evil and death came into the world. When you read the next book, the Book of Exodus, it's a story of the 40 years of wilderness wandering of the children of Israel. It was a darkroom for them. They were being developed by God. The Books of Job and Ecclesiastes are books almost wholly dedicated to the theme of pain, and suffering, and dark times. That's the theme.

The Book of Psalms, filled with prayers and songs of worship that are birthed in seasons of pain. In fact, Psalms even asked the question to God, why, God, why, God, why? Why do you allow this darkness in my life? You get to the prophets, like Jeremiah, written during a time of captivity. Another book by Jeremiah, the Book of Lamentations, how's that for dark? Lamentations, where he's spouting off in the darkest time of Israel's history of the captivity, as the city is being burned by fire and falling to the Babylonians.

You get to the little prophetic Book of Habakkuk, and you have a prophet complaining to God about the evil in the world and the suffering around him. Suffering has run amok. And God comes to him and says, you ain't seen nothing yet. It's going to get much worse. Then you get to the New Testament, and you have the Book of Hebrews and the Book of First Peter that were written principally to help believers, who were struggling in dark times.

Then you have, of course, the Book of Revelation, which predicts the darkest time in history yet to come, when, literally, the world will be darkened. The sun will grow dark. The stars will fall from the sky. And then towering above all of that is the hero of the Bible himself, the Lord Jesus Christ, called a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. So we approach the dark room of the scripture. And today, we look at a man who was developed in the dark, Joseph, in Genesis chapter 39.

Now, here's what I think is good for you to keep in mind about Joseph. There is more written about Joseph than written about Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob put together. There is more written about Joseph than the, what we call, chapters of origin in the Book of Genesis. More written about Joseph than the creation, more written about Joseph than the fall of man, more written about Joseph than the flood, more written about Joseph than the Tower of Babel. Than all of those events put together, there is more written about this one man, named Joseph. Chapters 37 all the way to chapter 50 are about Joseph.

We begin in chapter 39, and we're going to begin around verse 19. And what I want to show you in Joseph's life is four certainties about dark times in the life of a believer. And here's the first certainty. This is something you can rest assured. Dark times are permitted by God. That's pretty basic, right? God allows that. Most of us know that by now. Dark times are permitted by God.

We begin where Joseph is serving a prison sentence in verse 19. "And so it was, when his master--" his master was a man by the name of Potiphar-- "heard the words which his wife had spoken to him, saying, 'your servant did to me after this manner,' that his anger was aroused. His wife lied about Joseph, said to her husband that Joseph made a pass at her. He did not. He was pure. She lied. She made it up. But it says, "Joseph's master took him and

put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were confined. And he was there in prison."

Now, here's what you need to know. God let this happen. God let this happen. In fact, the overriding theme of all these chapters about Joseph is that God is superintending the dark times of this man named Joseph and developing a character out of him that is second to none. God is permitting the difficulties. In fact, Joseph's entire life has been hard, ever since he was a kid. He had a dad. His dad was named Jacob. As you know, Jacob was, I would call, a passive father, a very preoccupied dad. And so Joseph grew up in an environment of relational tension. I think it's safe to say that.

His dad, Jacob, and his uncle, Esau, had a falling out over a birthright, so much so that Esau said, next time I see Jacob, I'm going to kill him. Joseph was raised in that family. Also, Joseph's dad, Jacob, and Jacob's father-in-law, Laban, had a falling out over flocks, and herds, and property. Then Joseph's mother, Rachel, died when Joseph was quite young, giving birth to his younger brother. If that's not bad enough, his oldest brother, Reuben, had an incestuous relationship with one of his father's wives, by the name of Bilhah.

Then Joseph's sister, Dinah, was abducted and raped near the town of Shechem. And in response to that, Joseph's two older brothers went and committed genocide, killing all the males in that town. Now, that's a dysfunctional family, wouldn't you say? It's safe to say that. That's just the early years of Joseph's life. That's just the early years. After that, his brothers hated him, the Bible says. Now, I had three older brothers. We didn't get along all the time, but his brothers hated him. And they hated him so much they human-trafficked him, sold him to midianites, who brought him down to Egypt and took him to Potiphar's house, who became a slave to Potiphar. And his wife makes a pass at him. That's why he is in prison.

So I'm going to sum it up by saying this. Joseph did everything right, but everything wrong happened to him. Joseph did everything right, but everything wrong happened to him. Now, there's lots of reasons why suffering exists in the world. Most of the time, suffering is just the result of consequences of the fall. We live in a fallen world. Sometimes, however, we suffer as a direct consequence to our sin. So if a person gets drunk and goes out into traffic, wandering around, he might get hit by a car and suffer years of pain because of that. He is suffering the consequence of sinful behavior.

But sometimes we suffer as a direct judgment from God. The Old Testament shows how God promised the children of Israel they would go into captivity if they continue a certain path. They continued in that path. God brought them judgment. Sometimes suffering as the result of persecution. You love God. You shine the light of Christ. You're positive about all of it, but the world doesn't like that, and you get persecuted. Sometimes we suffer as a direct attack from Satan, like Job did in the first two chapters of that book.

So there's a variety of reasons why we can suffer. I just want to say, it's not important that you figure out the source. We kind of get hung up on that. Is this from me, or is this from God, or is this from the devil? Who cares? It's happening to you. More important than trying to figure out why you suffer, you need to figure out how you're going to suffer. How you suffer is far more important than why you are suffering. Look, suffering is a fact of life, all of life, every life, your life included.

Job said, "man is born to trouble surely as the sparks fly upward." You can bank on it. It's going to happen. Jesus said to the 12, "in the world, you shall have tribulation," not, you might have tribulation, boys. It might happen. He said, you're going to have it, guaranteed. In the Book of James, he writes, "count it all joy my brothers, when you fall into various trials." Not if you fall, when you fall.

So many of the songs of our life are sung in the minor key while in the dark. That is a fact of life, even God's people. Jesus said that God causes the sun to fall on the just and the unjust, and the rain to fall on the just and the unjust, the godly and the ungodly. That's why it's wrong to come up with this false theology that says, godly people don't suffer like ungodly people. That's true in an eternal sense. That is true. But in a temporal sense, we go through pain, and cancer, and broken bones, like everybody else. Sun and rain falls on the just and the unjust. The idea that if I just had enough faith, I wouldn't have to suffer, is nonsense. In fact, I don't trust people who don't suffer. I don't even like them.

[LAUGHTER]

Charles Hadden Spurgeon said, "I believe the hardest-hearted, most unlovely Christians in all the world are those who never had much trouble. And those who are the most sympathizing, loving, and Christ-like are those that have had the most afflictions. The worst thing that can happen to any of us is to have our path made too smooth." Dark times are permitted by God. That's first.

The second certainty is that dark times enhance the presence of God. Dark times enhanced the presence of God. I know that if I were to give you an open mic right now and say, just shout out of experiences where you have experienced the presence of God, so many of you would say, in the darkest moment of my life, God showed up. You would have that testimony.

Look at verse 21. It says, "but the Lord was with Joseph and showed him mercy, and He gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison." So Joseph is put in prison, but the Lord was with Joseph, the presence of God. I know it's true that when suffering happens to some people, they walk away from God. That happens a lot. I hear that a lot.

Yeah, you know, I trusted God. I put my faith in him, and he let this happen to me. So I just I quit going to church, man. I quit read my Bible. I'm not praying. I'm not trusting God. If I trust God and that happens to me-- I know people who walk away when suffering happens. But I also know that it's true that many find God when they start suffering. That is often what I find. I find that suffering doesn't move them away from God. Many times, suffering moves them right toward God. It's the time they get woken up out of their lethargy, out of their sleep God gets their attention.

So you might say pain moves people in different directions, toward God or away from God. I've often said, pain and suffering will either break your back or bend your knee. I guess you need to choose today what you're going to let that be. Is it going to break your back, or is it going to bend your knee? Sometimes people suffer and they get bitter. I find that. They turn inward. They get angry. They're resentful. They're filled with self-pity.

Other people go through suffering, and they don't get really bitter. I just say they get battered. They just get beat up. They hold on. It's sort of like a white knuckle it, they grit their teeth. They weather the storm. They make it through, barely. So some get bitter, some get battered, but then there are others who actually get better. They become better people. And that's not just a preacher's talking point. It's absolutely true. They become better people.

I'm going to put up a letter that I got recently from Jenn. And she said, "I grew up in Calvary and your teachings. When I was 16, I gave my life to the Lord. However, when I turned 18 years old, I rebelled." Now, I find this to be a pretty regular pattern. "For the majority of my adult life, I lived how I wanted. Then this virus hit, and it was the wake up call that I needed. Four weeks ago, I rededicated my life to the Lord." And she said, "I have never experienced such peace in my heart. I am hungry--" I love this-- "ravenous, even, for the Word! I know that the Holy Spirit is with me. I praise Him for my salvation." There's an example of pain moving somebody toward God.

[APPLAUSE]

It moved Jenn in the right direction. She became better, a better person. CS Lewis said, "pain plants the flag of truth in the fortress of a rebel soul." So good. "Pain plants the flag of truth in the fortress of a rebel soul." It was CS Lewis who said, "God whispers to us in our pleasures, but he shouts to us in our pain. Pain is God's megaphone to rouse a deaf world." So dark times enhance the presence of God.

You remember when the disciples once were on the Sea of Galilee, and that storm came up, and it was in the middle of the night? It was dark, and they looked out and they saw somebody walking toward them on the water. It was Jesus. I just think Jesus just had fun with that one. It's like the ultimate fun, practical joke to play in your buddies, because they're going to freak out. And they did, and I think Jesus kind of liked it. But have you ever thought about that, Jesus walking on the water, that Jesus came to them on the very thing they feared the most?

What did they fear the most? The storm. They'd been on the Sea of Galilee. Boats had sunk to the bottom of that lake because of those storms. They feared those storms. They feared those waves. And lo and behold, the presence of God was made clearer to them on the very thing they feared the most, the storm itself. I have a hunch that Jesus just might do the same in some of your experiences. The image of God is developed in the negatives. The image of God's presence is developed in the negatives of life, during those dark times, when the blotches of black get imprinted and developed. It's the image of God's presence. Dark times enhance the presence of God.

Let me take you to a third certainty. Dark times are a pathway for God, a pathway for God. Go back to verse 20. Joseph's master took him, put him in prison, a place where the king's prisoners were confined. And he was there in the prison. Verse 22, it says, "and the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners who were in prison. Whatever they did there, it was his doing." So Joseph gets promoted to, like, assistant prison warden, even though he's a prisoner himself.

There are many benefits to trials. I guess the most obvious benefit when you're going through a trial is it makes

you appreciate all the times you don't have trials, right? Darkness has a way of making us appreciate the light, but it develops our character. And I guess the majority of the Bible promises focus on that, that fact that when you go through difficult times, God is doing something with and in you to develop your character to make you a much better human being. All things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose. Listen to these benefits.

James, chapter 1. "Knowing this, the testing of your faith produces patience." You want patience? Really? You're praying for that? Good, but that's like a guarantee for the testing of your faith, because it says, "the testing of your faith produces patience." Romans, chapter 5, "tribulation produces perseverance, and perseverance, character, and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint."

Suffering does get our attention, as I just mentioned. Psalm 119, the psalm that said, "before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now I keep your word." It sounds like Jenn's letter. Before I was afflicted, I went astray. But now I keep your word. Suffering also shows us our weakness. 2 Corinthians, chapter 12, Paul talked about his thorn in the flesh. He said, "lest I be exalted above measure, a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, was given to buffet me."

Also, another benefit of suffering is it disciplines us Hebrews, chapter 12, "whom the Lord loves, he chastens." Whom the Lord loves, he chastens. Ouch! I love you. If you think, well, that's weird, it's not weird. If you're a parent, you get it. All parents do this. "Whom the Lord loves, he chastens and scourges every son that he receives." So it disciplines us. Also, suffering reminds us that the world is not our home. Romans, chapter 8, "the suffering of this present time is not worthy to be compared with the glory that will be revealed in us."

So all of that is character development. All of that is personal improvement. But wait, there's more. You see, when God takes you through trials, hardships, darkness, dark times, it's more than personal improvement. It's purposeful improvement, or I would even say, it's purposeful movement, that God is using the trial to position you for greater impact in this world.

That's exactly what happened with Joseph's life. And that is the theme of all these chapters, how God trained this man, Joseph, to be the leader of the world or the second in command of the world during the world's darkest time during that era, which was a worldwide famine. He went through times of darkness and positioning to get him right there to make the most impact.

So think of it. If Joseph's brothers didn't hate him, they never would have sold him. If they wouldn't have sold him, he wouldn't have gotten down to Egypt. If he didn't go down to Egypt, he wouldn't have worked for Potiphar. If he wouldn't have worked for Potiphar, he never would have been thrown in jail. If he hadn't gotten thrown in jail, he never would have interpreted the dreams for the butler and the baker.

If he wouldn't have interpreted the dreams for the butler and the baker, he never would have stood before the Pharaoh to interpret his dream. If he never would have stood before Pharaoh to interpret his dream, he wouldn't have come up with the most awesome solution on how to fix the problem and become the prime minister, second in control, of the world. God moved him into position. With each hardship, with each darkness, with each exposure to difficult affliction, God is knocking off the rough edges and moving him like a chess piece to usability.

Now, life is a series of problems. Have you noticed that? It's not like every now and then, every blue moon, maybe once every decade, you have a hardship. The truth is life is a series of these things. I would say this. You are either in a trial now, or you're coming out of a trial, or you're about to go into one. That's where you are today. You've just come out of one, you're in one now, or you're about to go in one.

And why is that? Let's just examine that. Why on Earth-- how can we trust a God that when we trust him, he allows a litany of things like what happened to Joseph to happen, a series of problems? Why we got to do that? Where's the love of God in that? Here's the answer. I'm glad you asked. It's because God is more interested in your character than he is in your comfort. It's because God is more interested in making you holy than making you happy. It's because God is more interested in making you valuable to others, not just joyful for yourself. It's about that. It's about a pathway to purpose. Pain is part of the path that takes us directly into the will of God. Pain is part of the path that takes us directly into the will of God.

Joseph spent years, I'm sure, going, now, why did this happen, and then why did that happen, and my mother's dead, and my brother's a creep, and they all hate me, and now I'm in prison, and then I got falsely accused, and now I'm forgotten in prison, and year after year after year, until the day where all of that is behind him, and he is second in command just under Pharaoh. Amazing.

Samuel Rutherford, one of my favorite old dead guys and author-- there's a book called The Letters of Samuel Rutherford, one of the best books ever. And he wrote a little poem about suffering. He said, "why should I tremble at the plow of my Lord, that maketh deep furrows in my soul. He's no idle husbandman. He purposeth a crop!" That little poem is profound to me. It's like, why should I tremble when God digs those deep furrows in my soul of experience, the hardships, the agony? Why should I tremble at that? He's a farmer who knows what he's up to. He purposes a crop. He wants me to grow, and he wants wonderful things to grow out of my life. He purposes a crop.

Imagine if Christopher Columbus would have turned back and not come to the New World. What if he had just gone back to Spain and he goes, you know what, those waves are so big and this journey is so hard, so I'm back home? Nobody would blame him if he would have turned back. But if he would have turned back, nobody would have remembered him either. If you want to be memorable, if you want to be valuable, then you have to allow a little bit of the miserable, by the glory of God, to shape you and to take you places. So dark times are permitted by God. They enhance the presence of God. They're a pathway for God.

I want to close on this note and the fourth certainty about dark times for a believer. Dark times include perks from God. They include perks. So Joseph is in prison. We've established this. He's there not because of his own fault. He's done everything right. Everything wrong has happened to him. It happens month after month, year after year after year. But did you notice in verse 21 it says, "but the Lord was with Joseph--" now watch this-- "and showed him mercy, and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison?"

In verse 23, "the keeper of the prison did not look into anything that was under Joseph's authority, because the Lord was with him. And whatever he did, the Lord made it prosper." You see, though, God allows him into these dark times. These little rays of light keep popping up in these verses that show us the God is mitigating the severity of the darkness. He's taking the trial and pulling the edge off of it just a little bit. He's peppering his suffering with blessing.

Verse 21, "the Lord showed him mercy." You know what that means? It's like, he's in prison, he's suffering, but the Lord showed him mercy. In other words, it could have been much worse. It could have been much worse. Joseph could have lost his life. Joseph could have gotten severely beaten up. He could have been maimed for life because of his prison sentence. He could have been ill-treated, but he wasn't, because the Lord showed him mercy.

Then it says also in verse 21, "and he--" the Lord-- "gave him favor." And we know what that means. Though he is incarcerated, he's allowed to be elevated. He comes into a position of leadership, even in jail, as an assistant supervisor. So all of that previous suffering of those years in his life have created now a wonderful man, a tempered and trustworthy man that the prison supervisor notices and elevates.

And then in verse 23, "whatever he did, the Lord made it prosper." So God is working behind the scenes. He's being kind. He's being favorable. He's being merciful. He's giving him the advantage, so to speak. I'm drawing your attention to this because I want you to learn to start looking for these perks. Start looking for the silver lining in the dark times. Start noticing where God puts the favor and the mercy and prospers you, even in the trial.

You know, when you get into a dark room at first, you're blinded. You can't see anything. But if you sit-in the darkness for a while, your eyes grow accustomed to it. And another set of cells in your eyes start taking over. At first, you've been focusing and looking at the objects delineated by the cone cells of the eye. But in the darkness, when you have no ability for those cells to work, another set of cells, called the rods, that control your peripheral vision become very active so that you can start seeing things you couldn't see before.

It's funny, in the middle of the night, if I have to get up sometimes in a pitch dark room, my bedroom is pitch dark-- trust me, that's how my wife wants it, pitch black. But in the middle of the night, I can get up and I can barely notice little objects on the floor, like, oh, there's my dog. I better not step on him. And there's that toy that my dog left. I better not step on that. I can notice that. My eyes have grown accustomed to the dark.

And so what I want to say to you is, let your eyes grow accustomed to the dark experience you are in so you can start noticing the favor, and the mercies, and God prospering you. Notice that. Start looking for that. How do you do that? Develop a thankful heart. Develop a thankful heart. Jeremiah, when the city of Jerusalem was burning down around him, and people had been taken captive, and the Babylonians were taking over his town in the middle of that, you know what he said? You know what he said? You know what he said. It's one of your favorite verses. Lamentations, chapter 3, "through the Lord's mercies, we are not consumed." "Through-- the Lord's mercies, we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. Great is thy faithfulness."

If you take a handful of sand-- I've used this illustration a number of time. Take a handful of sand, and if you start kind of combing through it with your fingers to find pieces of metal, good luck. But if you take a magnet, sweep it

over that sand, foomph, comes up, right? A thankful heart is like a magnet. A thankful heart will start noticing the mercy, start noticing the perks, start noticing the blessing, and God prospering. But it's so dark. Yeah, but I notice that. It could be worse. This is what God is doing. This is how God is sustaining me.

Now, just a final word in closing to those of you who are, right now, in the midst of a dark trial. You've never experienced anything like this before. It's an affliction. I just want you to hear this. The righteous are resilient. The righteous are resilient. Yeah, the righteous fall down. We get scuffed up. We get hurt. But they always get back up.

Proverbs 24:16, "though a righteous man falls seven times, he rises again." So I want to say to you, dear Christian brother or sister, get up, because you are more than a conqueror through God, who loved us. You are more than a conqueror. Get up, move on, keep going. This is not the end. You're being developed in the darkness. The negative is for a positive result. The master, far better than Ansel Adams, is manipulating the chemistry of your life that you can't see or appreciate right now to make you into a work of art more valuable and precious than gold.

And if you have derailed a little bit because you've gone through a tough time and I'm taking my ball and going to go home, wah, sorry for me not being more sympathetic than that, but I'm not that sympathetic. Because whatever life you had in Christ, as bad as it could get, is far better than the alternative, far better than the alternative. And I want to say to you, get back on track with Him.

[APPLAUSE]

Come back to Him. Settle in with Him. Father, we pray as we close this message. I think of so many things I could say, and I just need to stop. But I am so grateful that you are a good God, that you are a merciful God, that you're a God who prospers us in the darkness, who is merciful to us and is favorable toward us in the prison.

I pray we'd look for those perks, those little granules of grace that you show us. I pray that you strengthen your people, who have fallen during a time of great difficulty and darkness. Give them strength to rise up for your glory in Jesus's name. Amen. Speaking of rising up, let's all rise up and we'll sing this last song of praise. Let your heart be filled with the Spirit of trust, as you entrust your future into his hands.

We are so glad you've joined us for Darkroom. We would love to know how this message impacted you. Share your story with us. Email mystory@calvarynm.church. And if you'd like to support this Bible teaching ministry with a financial gift, visit calvarynm.church/give.