

Mastering Our Midnights

by Russell DeLong

The sermon emphasizes mastering our spiritual midnights through faith in Christ, leading to eternal light and joy.

Scripture: Exodus 11:4, Judges 16:3, Psalm 91:5, Matthew 25:6, John 8:12, Acts 16:25, Revelation 21:25

Topics: "Overcoming Adversity", "Spiritual Hope"

Description

Russell DeLong preaches on the theme 'Mastering Our Midnights,' highlighting how our attitude towards dark and challenging times can either make us stronger or weaker, better or bitter, victims or victors. Drawing from biblical references, he emphasizes the importance of mastering our midnights rather than letting them control us, using examples like the Passover in Egypt, Samson's actions, and Paul and Silas praising God in their darkest hour. DeLong contrasts night as a symbol of despair and evil with Jesus being the Light of the World, offering hope and dispelling darkness from our lives.

Transcript

For our beautiful theme today, I am indebted to my friend, Dr. Roy S. Nicholson, president of the Wesleyan Methodist church. We were preaching colleagues at the great Lakeland, Florida, camp meeting. One day he said, "I've been thinking of a theme that maybe you could use on 'Showers of Blessing.'" Always eager to receive helpful suggestions, I pressed him for it. He answered, "Mastering Our Midnights."

Midnight in the natural realm is normally the darkest, blackest hour in the twenty-four. It is farthest from sunset and longest from sunrise. It signifies the period most removed from light in either direction.

In the moral and spiritual realms also midnight symbolizes all that is dark, black, distressing, painful, disappointing, and discouraging. It is the period of trial when the lights are all out.

Our midnights can have a very definite effect on us. It all depends on our attitude toward

them and our use of them. They can make us stronger or weaker, better or bitter, victims or victors. We must master them or they will master us. So the question -- Are you mastering your midnights or are your midnights mastering you?

Midnight is referred to often in the Bible. It was midnight when the destroying angel went throughout Egypt killing the first-born in every home not having the blood on the lintel of the door. The blood changed

midnight into morning; death was avoided and life preserved (Exodus 11:4).

Samson destroyed the city gate at midnight (Judges 16:3). It was midnight when the cry was made, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh." For five wise virgins it became everlasting day, but for the five foolish virgins it became night -- "outer darkness" forever. It was at midnight that Paul and Silas sang praises to God, although they were suffering from scourged backs and their hands and feet were in stocks. For them morning came with an angel to bring deliverance and usher in the sunrise.

Night is the antithesis of day. In the beginning God created all things, "and the darkness he called Night" (Gen. 1: 5). Night has come to mean despair, time of evil, blackness, and terror. The Psalmist spoke of "the terror by night" (Ps. 91:5) and "the pestilence that walketh in darkness" (Ps. 91:6). In the books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastics we find these references: "The way of the wicked is as darkness" (Proverbs 4: 19), and, "The fool walketh in darkness" (Eccles. 2:14). Isaiah also referred to "the people" as walking "in darkness."

Jesus is called "The Light of the World." He himself said, "I am the light." John said, "God is light, and in him is no darkness" (I John 1: 5). Paul declared, "We are not of the night" (I Thess. 5:5).

In this present world it seems conclusive that there is a mixture of light and darkness, good and evil, blessing and cursing, sunshine and rain, roses and thorns. A battle rages between the forces of darkness and the armies of light.

In the future life a separation will be made. In heaven all is light and "there is no night

there." (Rev. 21:25; 22:5.) God is the Light and in Him is no darkness at all. Hell is described by Jesus as a place of "outer darkness" (Matt. 8:12). Jude speaks of the abode of sinners as "the blackness of darkness for ever" (Jude 13).

In this life we shall have tribulation and sorrow and pain. But we can have for our spirits

and minds the Light. Jesus can dispel the darkness of sin from our hearts and the blackness of despair from our souls. We can have light within, even though it may be dark without.

In heaven all midnights will be past forever. But here on earth we still have them. The

midnight of sin can be dispelled by the light of Christ in the soul, but the midnights of trouble and sorrow and pain remain.

There are three attitudes we can take toward our midnights. We can oppose them bitterly,

accept them stoically, or welcome them happily. The last is the Christian's answer to personal midnights. We master them. They become stepping-stones to higher levels instead of stumbling blocks to lower living. Someone has said, "Difficulties pull the trigger; what explodes depends on what you are loaded with." If you are filled with light there is an explosion of love. If you are loaded with darkness there is a blast of hatred. Your midnights make or break you.

What enables one to "master his midnights" instead of having his midnights master him?

First, Christ, the Light, within.

Second, Faith in the goodness and power of God.

Third, The inner knowledge that light always follows darkness and morning always

follows the evening in God's plan. Read in Genesis -- it is always "the evening and the morning," never the reverse. God always leaves us in the light.

An unknown author has penned these beautiful lines.

I have found a joy in sorrow,

A secret balm for pain,

A beautiful tomorrow

Of sunshine after rain.

I have found a branch of healing

Near every bitter spring,

And a whispered promise stealing

Over every broken string.

Man's last midnight is death. This too can be mastered through Christ, the mighty

Conqueror. For without the Saviour death means perpetual and eternal midnight -- "outer

darkness." But for those who already possess Him, the Light, and He possesses them, death means no more midnights, no more darkness -- only light -- eternal light in God's eternal day and His perpetual sunrise.

Virgil Brock has written:

Beyond the sunset, oh, blissful morning,

When with our Saviour heav'n is begun!

Earth's toiling ended, oh, glorious dawning,

Beyond the sunset, when day is done!

Beyond the sunset, no clouds will gather,

No storms will threaten, no fears annoy.

Oh, day of gladness, oh, day unending,

Beyond the sunset, eternal joy! [1]

What an inspiring, glorious hope! Midnights mastered and past forever!

W. C. Poole in a similar vein wrote:

When I shall come to the end of my way,
When I shall rest at the close of life's day,
When, "Welcome home," I shall hear Jesus say,
Oh, that will be sunrise for me!

Sunrise tomorrow, sunrise tomorrow,
Sunrise in glory is waiting for me;
Sunrise tomorrow, sunrise tomorrow,
Sunrise with Jesus for eternity. [2]

Midnights mastered here means no midnights over there.

We shall exchange earthly darkness for eternal light, temporal sorrow for everlasting joy,
temporary pain here for perpetual health hereafter, midnights now for middays then, sunsets for
continuous sunrises.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/russell-delong/mastering-our-midnights/>

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