

A bright star in the top right corner of a dark, starry space, with a beam of light shining down from it.

Out of Darkness...

Darkness Of Religion

The Bible talks about all of creation having life and waiting for the day of release from its decay and death. This includes mankind and uses the word “groaning.” All life has its source of life in God but was made subject to sin in the awful fall identified in the Bible. It groans to be free in that sense of spirit freedom God alone gives. The spirit was created to worship, which explains why people worship. We were created to worship God, our Creator/Father. From the moment of the “fall from grace,” the enemy of God and man began provision of substitutes rather than the one true God. Early on we see the worship of the constellations, the worship of created creatures, the worship of “the golden calf,” the worship of idols of wood and stone, of ideologies and mythology, Greek gods who committed adultery, murdered, stole, treachery of all kinds. We have seen religion calling for the death of babies in the Ganges River, for murders of women and children, of awful extreme violence. Who would worship such gods, and who would worship gods made by human hands? Those whose hearts are darkened, those who follow their instinctive desire to worship, but do not know or seek after or acknowledge the God Who made them, in whom their being exists. Those who exchange worship of God Himself for things, people, places, objects. The darkness of religions!

continued on inside back cover

Out of Darkness...

by
Lois Ewald

Copyright © 2019 by Lois Ewald

ISBN 978-1-948362-29-0

Published by
Whispering Pines Publishing
Shoals, Indiana

Additional copies can be purchased from:

store.countrypinesprinting.com

or by contacting:

Country Pines Inc.
11013 Country Pines Road
Shoals, IN 47581
812-247-3315

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.zondervan.com The “NIV” and “New International Version” are trademarks registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by Biblica, Inc.™

Dedication

With a thankful heart, I dedicate this book to those God has used throughout my life to enable me to see, understand and move out of darkness and into His light. That light is always and only

Jesus.

My prayers for those who read this little book are found in the Scriptures:

“Do not gloat over me, my enemy! Though I have fallen, I will rise. Though I sit in darkness the Lord will be my light. Because I have sinned against Him, I will bear the Lord’s wrath, until He pleads my case and upholds my cause. He will bring me out into the light; I will see His righteousness” (Micah 7:8-9).

“You, Lord, are my lamp; the Lord turns my darkness into light” (2 Samuel 22:29).

“...always thanking the Father. He has enabled you to share in the inheritance that belongs to His people, who live in the light. For He has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of His dear Son, who purchased our freedom and forgave our sins. Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. He existed before anything was created and is supreme over all creation” (Colossians 1:12-15).

“Do not fear, for I have redeemed you, I have summoned you by name; you are mine” (Isaiah 43:1b).

I would like to give you this little book as my Christmas greeting for 2019. May it bless you with hopeful encouragement in celebrating our Savior's birth, moving with your mind and heart into the new year. While the prince of this world may attempt it, there is no darkness able to smother the Light of Christ and cripple the mind and heart of His child. There are times when darkness may seem to last forever, to overwhelm us, but God is at work in darkness and His beauty and power will shine forth. Wait on our Lord! He came into a world of darkness with a plan and power to implement it and in truth and rule and might, He will come again. In between these two "comings," He comes at our cries, at our need for Him. He is present in our worship. He always comes! May He give you the most blessed Christmas in your heart this year, one lasting forever! le

“And I will give you the *treasures of darkness* and hidden wealth of secret places in order that you may know that it is I, the Lord, the God of Israel, who calls you by your name” (Isaiah 45:3).

Questions:

What are those “treasures of darkness”? What is the “hidden wealth of secret places”? How can His treasures of darkness and hidden wealth of secret places, two special and unique gifts, cause us to know that it is He, the Lord, who calls us by our name? Because these are personal! He calls us by name and gives His treasures of darkness in such a way that we know this is God.

Introduction

The longer I live the more I recognize the “darkness” written about in Scripture. In ignorance of God’s teaching and being indoctrinated with worldly philosophy, wanting to believe the best of things so I could be happy in doing what I pleased in life, I tried to make everything end with the “happily ever after” of fairy tales. The problem with this is having to finally acknowledge that there seems to be something dark in most things in life ... a dark side, if you please. Happily ever after does not exist on a world level. So if we are deep thinkers, we wonder what is wrong with things, what is wrong with people, what is wrong with life, and what is wrong with me.

The world gropes in **darkness** and groans in its pain. The Bible says even nature groans waiting for the day of release. We live our lives in the midst of this. Our spiritual insight into the “darkness of this world” is important. Without it we will always be looking on earth for what can never be found, suffering complex circumstances personally, feeling darkness in our spirit, even though we are our Father’s child. We will never understand life as it is in our world, the action of people, governments, nations, and sometimes even our own. Our Father offers us insight; it’s part of His Light giving. It’s amazing how many references are in Scripture regarding darkness, night, shadow, etc. To name a few: the darkness of people in a sinful world, spiritual darkness, darkness of death, loss, grief, discouragement, despair, distress, fear, darkness in mind and heart; and there is darkness we feel in certain places and experiences. His Word, Light for our pathway, leads us into peace and purpose.

NIV: *For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.*

AMP: *For our struggle is not against flesh and blood (contending only with physical opponents), but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this (present) darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly (supernatural) places.*

Most of us throughout life experience some lovely things in friendships, happy times, homes and family we love, blessing upon blessing; but without question, there are times of **darkness**. During these times we may struggle with “where is God’s love and power, His faithfulness and promises?” It seems difficult to accept the actions of God when they seem out of His character, or are not what we had in mind for Him to do or not to do. The Bible says “His ways are past finding out” (Job 9:10; 1 Cor. 2:9-12). They are beyond us and sometimes usher in a time of **darkness**, a season we may not understand.

My thoughts about all this took me into the lives of many Biblical characters, consideration of the subject of darkness surrounding the the birth of Christ. In this you will find stories of Bible people, teaching regarding darkness from Scripture, some personal items, some things that have inspired and helped me along the way, with much Scripture. You will note Biblical principles for dark times. The Bible simply says what our Father knows we need to hear and understand. He gives Himself in our dark times.

As you read this book, may He speak to you personally and lovingly:

“Come to Me if you feel weary this Christmas Season. Come to Me and let me give you the treasures of **darkness** in your life. I am the One with arms to embrace you, wanting to walk with you in all those human experiences that make your soul feel lost, your heart feel empty and afraid, that cause your days and nights to feel **dark** and lonely. Come to Me. I am your Light and even if you walk in **darkness**, I shall light your pathways. You are on your way home, and I am with you. I am God and there is no other. Where I am becomes sacred and filled with hidden wealth. Abide in Me in any dark place because ‘I have called you by your name and you are mine.’”

A blessed Christmas to you. (1e)

Christmas to His World from Our Father

The night was dark and still! God interrupted with...

Music! Heaven's choir of angels!

The brightest star that ever appeared in the Heavens!

Shepherds became fearful as they stood still, watched, and listened!

The wise men set out to find Him!

"Glory to God in the highest and on earth, peace and good will!"

And in a tiny stable, a child was born!

God the Father's greatest gift to this world came in the dark stillness of the night. It was sudden when the angels began to sing, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace and good will toward men." It was God's introduction of Jesus as the Savior into the world. He gave direction to wise men to follow the brightest star the world had ever seen.

Darkness was invaded. Insignificant shepherds became significant forever as they listened and followed. All the residents of the barn were awakened to share their home in the stillness of that dark night. The Lord Jesus was born ... this One conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of Mary, chosen out of all the women of the world to give birth to the Savior, who said in response to the message of God's Spirit, "let it be unto me as You have said, I am your handmaiden" (The Gospels). In the stillness of this dark night, this tiny King came into the world He had Himself created. He came as God/man for purposes only understood when God gives understanding and believed when God invades the darkness of minds and hearts with His eternal Light. He is the Light

of life, and life takes on new meaning when Jesus takes up residence in a human soul.

The world today is as dark as the world was then, except our Light has come! God sent Him! The Bible says that men love darkness rather than light. The light of the world is Jesus. The difference He makes? Night versus day! And He says, “Come, follow me.”

“Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you. See, **darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples**, but the Lord rises upon you and His glory appears over you” (Isaiah 60:1-2).

In fact, all of Isaiah 60 shall take place, because Jesus was born. This is the message of Christmas and it’s for the whole world, His world. Father God sent Him in the stillness of a dark night. And when we open our heart to Him, His light dispels the darkness, so we may become His lights in a dark world, to light the way to the Father. The human race needs to see and know Jesus to dispel their darkness. He is the “treasure of darkness and hidden wealth of secret places” (a sacred stable, no less). May our hearts hold Christmas as sacred. May we become His reflectors shining in the stillness and darkness of the night.

Jesus, the name that calms our fears about everything, the One who came as the Sacrifice for our sins, the One who battled the enemy and rescues us from his captivity, the One who shows us what life is meant to be, the door to our Father and everlasting life, the One who gives Life with purpose and comes into us as peace and contentment and joy, who walks daily with us on our journey home.

He is the foundation of His Church, the Body of Christ, the declaration of a wonderful hymn written by Samuel John Stone:

The Church's one foundation
is Jesus Christ her Lord,
She is His new creation,
by water and the Word.
From Heaven He came and sought her
to be His holy bride,
And with His blood He bought her
and for her life He died.

Jesus is the Treasure.

He is the hidden wealth of secret places.

The following is the first verse of one of my favorite songs, "Jesus Himself," composed by Beatrice Bush Bixler:

Faint with the heat and the length of the road,
I was *oppressed with a wearisome load.*
One came so tenderly saying to me,
"Give Me thy load, it's too heavy for thee."
Jesus Himself, Jesus Himself.

Jesus is the Treasure, the hidden wealth of secret places.

That First Christmas Inside Heaven

Have you ever wondered about Heaven when Jesus came to earth?

Questions:

What was taking place in Heaven at the time of His birth? What were angels told?

Were Heaven's residents made aware as God moved forward?

Were they updated with God's plan noted in Genesis?

Were they told about Mary and the Holy Spirit's conception of Jesus?

Could angels ever understand that the One Who created the world would offer to His Father that he be born in a stable amid the sounds of bleating sheep?

Do you wonder what they thought when God assigned a single star and placed it above Bethlehem in His galaxy?

Can you imagine the worship of their hearts when the angel choir sang to announce the birth of the Christ child?

Were the myriad of angels standing as they watched in the stillness of an earthly night? Or were they bowing in silence as He entered our human world?

Do you wonder what the angels who guarded the gate of the Garden of Eden, and those escorting God's married couple out of their home, were thinking as all this took place?

And what were those ministering angels in the Old Testament Scriptures thinking as they watched?

Would they wonder at such a small announcement of His birth, this King of Heaven, knowing what they knew?

And what did those Old Testament saints already in Heaven know?

What had God shared with Heaven at the time of His royal birth?

Heaven will be filled someday with those who love Him and the song will be one of victory. We will bow before our King! The King who was born in a stable to die on a Cross that His created beings might live.

Jesus, the Treasure of darkness.

Jesus, the hidden wealth of secret places.

The first Christmas was...

1. God's powerful and gracious embracing of planet earth
2. God's announcement of rescue
3. God's implementation of His plan for restoration
4. God's entry into **darkness** for our redemption
5. God's first steps toward the Cross
6. God's open-door policy to all mankind
7. PEACE ON EARTH, GOOD WILL TOWARD

MAN

When God's gift of Jesus is received, changes take place in us:

We love God and seek His glory

We love our fellowman and seek his good

We begin to see ourselves as He sees us and look to Jesus

We enter the race as new creations

There was a lovely, meaningful Christmas song written in 1984 by Mark Lowry who had often pondered over the questions he included in his lyrics. He entitled it, "Mary Did You Know?" Perhaps this is a favorite of yours as it is mine. His song certainly needs no additions; it is wonderful as it is, but

when I hear it, I am thinking also of the following questions:

“Mary, did you sense the **darkness of your world** when you lived? You knew the Scriptures well and sang them at His birth. Father God recorded them for us so we would know your heart. But did you know all that was meant when He was born to be the Light of the World, to penetrate the souls of mankind, to give new hearts, to light up the recesses of dark minds, to become a Light to the nations? Did you know He was the One and did you also wonder with His followers when you stood at the foot of His Cross and heard Him tell His disciple John to take you home and care for you? Did you feel the awesome **darkness at that place called Calvary?** Did you feel that darkness move into your soul when Simeon told you, at His dedication, that a sword would pierce your soul? What did you know, Mary?’ What was it you treasured in your heart?

Jesus, the Treasure of Heaven came down!

Jesus, the hidden wealth of secret places!

Darkness of Our Personal Worlds

There is no **darkness** so personal or felt so deeply as those involving our personal human family. Pain and sorrow in lives of those dear to our hearts gives us tears and we feel willing to do nearly anything to protect or to spare.

When reading Biblical records, it is easy to forget that the people we read about are real people. They are not fictitious characters in a story to prove a point or give a human example. They are human beings like ourselves with emotions that run the gamut, like our own. God recorded the Old Testament stories for us as examples. This is what the New Testament

says, and they are not myths or fairy tales or fake records. They are meant for our learning and understanding of God.

So, did these people experience the throes of fear, discouragement, dread, disappointment, darkness, darkness, and darkness upon darkness? Of course they did! It is the way of life apart from God. Did they live in a fallen world like ours, when to do evil is applauded while to do right is mocked? Of course they did! Did God come to their rescue? Of course He did! Did darkness vanish when light appeared? Of course it did!

Behold the Light! The Light came! With tears and anguish they had waited and waited. It came in the darkness of night! We named it Christmas.

When the Song of the Angels Is Stilled

When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and the princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flocks,
The work of Christmas begins:
To find the lost,
To heal the broken,
To feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner,
To rebuild the nations,
To bring peace among people,
To make music in the heart.

This was a quote by Howard Thurman, 1899-1981, an author and philosopher, etc. It speaks to the hearts of those of us who give thanks for the real Christmas, the birth of Jesus

Christ, sent to make God known and visible in a world of **darkness** and pain. He is the rescuer of the world, and when we follow Him He uses us in His rescue plan. And for those of us who walk with Him, Christ in us dispels the darkness and breaks the chains. He does the work of Christmas:

Out of **darkness** ...

Scriptures

When I began putting this little book together, researching and thinking of Scriptures to share, I was very surprised how often the words “dark” and “darkness” appeared—many more times than I had thought. So I decided to print some of these and page after page were quickly filled. I’ve taken time to look at them in depth. You might like to do this too for your own edification and the insights our Father will give you from His Word. I selected some because they are verses I’ve used in teaching, feeling they have an important place in our understanding of God, His world, life and walking with Him, and the Cross being the central place in the history of mankind. These Scriptures elicit thought and meditation.

Just a few from the Old Testament:

Genesis 1:1-5: In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and **darkness** was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. And God said, “Let there be light, and there was light. And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the **darkness** He called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

Genesis 3:23-24: So the Lord God **banished** him from the Garden of Eden... After He drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

Genesis 15: When the sun had set and **darkness** had fallen... the Lord made a covenant.... Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your shield, your very great reward.

Exodus 10:22: So Moses stretched out his hand toward heaven, and there was pitch **darkness** in all the land of Egypt three days.

Exodus 14:20: ...coming between the host of Egypt and the host of Israel. And there was the cloud and the **darkness**. And it lit up the night without one coming near the other all night.

1 Samuel 2:9: He will guard the feet of His faithful ones, but the wicked shall be cut off in **darkness**, for not by might shall a man prevail.

Isaiah 9:2: The people who walked in **darkness** have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep **darkness**, on them the light shined.

Isaiah 42:16: And I will lead the blind in a way that they do not know, in paths that they have not known I will guide them. I will turn the **darkness** before them into light, the rough places into level ground. These are the things I do, and I do not forsake them.

Isaiah 45:7-8: I create the light and make the **darkness**. I send good times and bad times. I, the Lord, am the One who does these things. "Open up, O heavens, and pour out your righteousness. Let the earth open wide so salvation and righteousness can sprout up together. I, The Lord, created them.

Isaiah 60:1-2: Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. For behold, **darkness** shall cover the earth, and thick **darkness** the peoples, but the Lord will arise upon you, and His glory will be seen upon you.

Jeremiah 13:16: Give glory to the Lord your God before He brings **darkness**, before your feet stumble on the twilight mountains, and while you look for light He turns it into gloom and makes it deep **darkness**.

Lamentations 3:2: He has driven and brought me into **darkness** without any light.

Psalms 18:11: He made **darkness** His covering, His canopy around Him, thick clouds **dark** with water.

Psalms 104:19-20: You made the moon to mark the seasons, and the sun knows when to set. You send the **darkness**, and it becomes night, when all the forest animals prowl about.

Psalms 139:12: Even the darkness is not **dark** to you, the night is bright as the day, for **darkness** is as light with you.

Jonah 2:1-3: Then Jonah prayed to the Lord, his God from the belly of the fish, saying, “**I called out to the Lord, out of my distress, and He answered me, out of the belly of Sheol** I cried, and you heard my voice. For you cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the flood surrounded me; all your waves and your billows passed over me. Then I said, “I am driven away from your sight; yet I shall again look upon your holy temple. “The waters closed in over me to take my life, the deep surrounded me, weeds were wrapped about my head...”

Micah 7:8: Rejoice not over me, O my enemy; when I fall, I shall rise, when I sit in **darkness**, the Lord will be a light to me.

Just a few from the New Testament:

Matthew 4:16: The people dwelling in **darkness** have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned.

Mark 15:33: And when the sixth hour had come, there was **darkness** over the whole land until the ninth hour.

Luke 1:79: ...to give light to those who sit in **darkness** and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.

Luke 22:53: When I was with you day after day in the temple, you did not lay hands on me. But this is your hour, and the power of **darkness**.

John 3:19-20: And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and peopled loved the **darkness** rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed.

John 12: 35-36: So Jesus said to them, “The light is among you for a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, lest **darkness** overtake you. The one who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going. While you have the light, believe in the light that you may become sons of light.” When Jesus had said these things, he departed and hid himself from them.

John 12:46: I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in **darkness**.

2 Corinthians 4:6: For God, who said, “Let light shine out of **darkness**,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus

Ephesians 5:8-11: For at one time you were **darkness**, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light....

Take no part in the unfruitful works of **darkness**, but instead expose them.

Ephesians 6:12: For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present **darkness**, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

Colossians 1:13: He has delivered us from the domain of **darkness** and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son.

1 John 1:5-7: This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in Him is no **darkness** at all. If we say we have fellowship with Him while we walk in **darkness**, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.

(And of course there are many, many others I've not included.)

Darkness and the History of God

Since the Holy Spirit was sent to make Christ known to us, to give understanding of spiritual truths, He is the One

who teaches us the deep things of God.

Many notables, many events, many crises, many prayers, many failures and many consequences of bad choices and judgments outside of the will of God, many promises given and kept by God are recorded with us in mind. God says this in The New Testament. He's the One who promises treasures of **darkness**.

These records are worthy of our attention as those who need to be taught. God uses the words dark and darkness many times. They are part of His Truth, His teaching to make His point. We see physical darkness, darkness of mind and spirit and soul, darkness of evil intentions, darkness of plots and darkness hiding His Presence, just to name a few.

What are some of the treasures His Word shows us?

God never changes.

His character is perfect, always perfect.

He is all knowing. Nothing escapes Him.

God does not sleep, but works in light or darkness to bring about His purpose, His perfect will.

His children are always in His mind and heart.

Our difficulties and circumstances are known to Him.

God is all powerful, sovereign, mighty.

For us, the children of His Kingdom, are these not the true treasures?

Are they not the hidden wealth of secret places?

Darkness in the World's Beginning

Darkness was everywhere (Genesis 1:1) until God said, "Let there be light" and there was light. His Spirit was "hovering" over this darkness, this darkness without form or purpose or beauty. God had a plan and power. With His voice, He began to implement His plan for creation.

The description of earth is like a human life without the Creator, without form, purpose or beauty until God's Spirit, hovering over the soul of man, that same God of knowledge and power and good intent says, "Let there be light." With His voice His process begins. Treasures of darkness and hidden wealth of secret places: God is God, all present, all knowing, all powerful. He has power for new beginnings, and His Voice penetrates darkness. He has a good plan for the lives of His created beings.

Darkness had moved into the Garden. It had not always been there. In fact (Genesis 2/3) details are special, Adam being made with God's own hands and breathed into with God's own breath, resulting in his becoming a living being. Not good for Adam to be alone according to God, so with a rib from Adam, He created Eve. Male and female. There could be no greater love story than this one: both with the likeness of God, both without sin and its darkness, truly a "marriage made in Heaven." Well, if that married couple had remained the same, what a different world we would be sharing with each other. How different would be our planet, a world without darkness.

But one evening when God came down to visit with them, something had changed. This couple was hiding because they had sinned. Darkness was in their hearts and minds. Dark-

ness was in the garden. Darkness was in their personal relationship, darkness in their relationship with God. Darkness had moved into all God's creation. So, what did the Creator do? He spoke in the midst of this darkness to ask an awesome question, "Where are you, Adam?" His question may have appeared connected to location, but actually it was much more than that. God is God. He knew where they were, but in their darkness He wanted them to know where they were now, separate from Him, separate from light, from all that is good and holy and perfect, separate from an untarnished conscience, separate from peace and from one another in love and gratitude and respect and truth ... darkness filled their beings. This was new to them. His voice issued fearful judgment. Darkness in mind and heart when angels ushered them from the garden. We can only imagine their shame and fear and helplessness, perhaps tears for the first time, new emotions for Adam and Eve. But God, our God, declared with His voice that He would send One who would do battle with the enemy of that garden. It would be fought between the dark forces of this present world and the One who came as the Light of the World. He would win, but at the price of His life on a Cross. It is God's message to a dark world!

Treasure of darkness: The mystery of the ages would come! Light! JESUS!

Darkness in Judgment

Darkness filled the sky. For forty days and nights, nothing but rain! Do you think darkness was inside the ark? There was only one window and darkness was above it. Well, I don't think so because where God is, in Him is no darkness at all.

The word picture is frightening with water from above and from below. The motion of the ark, sounds of the animal kingdom (Genesis 6), the wonder of rain that had never been seen before, but God in all this darkness was holding steadily that ark of safety.

Inside were His chosen. There were eight people God saved intending to start over. They were resting in the care of the Father who had a plan and had been obeyed.

And one day, the darkened skies were again lighted up with His galaxies. The stars could be seen through the upper window in dark nights. He stopped the rain and His people waited for the morning.

Treasure and hidden wealth: Our safety is in Christ. He is the ark, and the door is yet open. Jesus saves!

Darkness in Trust

The night was **dark**, and Abram was told what to do. It was a strange message for a man of his day and his position;

he was to leave everything and follow God to a place God chose for God's purpose. Abram built an altar and began to pack (Genesis 12-22). His heart was one of obedience to God whom He would come to know as friend.

It was in the dark of the night when God took him out to count the stars to show him His plan for so many children he would be unable to count. Abram again built an altar. He lived a life of many altars.

And another dark night was made even darker with the message from God that he was to slay his son, whom he loved, as a sacrifice to the God who had promised and given him. When morning came, Abraham again began to pack. He gathered the wood and the son in obedience to the One he knew as friend. He also had the sacrifice; but Isaac never knew the plan, so he asked. Surely there must have been some darkness of wonder surrounding Abraham's heart and mind as they travelled along together. This man of many altars was about to build another altar and his obedient heart set the stage. But God! A short phrase we learn and speak in experience when we walk with our Father who meets us in our dark nights before our altars. God knew what was in the heart of Abraham. Abraham also knew. God was his God.

Treasure: We see here that Abraham was not loved because he was perfect, was not the servant of God because he made no mistakes, did everything right. God still speaks in the night to those He invites to share with Him His plan for the world. God still requires altars of obedience. God's plan is never thwarted by the failures of man, because He is God and calls imperfect sinners His friends. Jesus said to His faulty disciples, "I call you friends." Jesus knows our every weakness and embraces us as we follow Him, as we stand with Him

under the stars, or in dark nights when no stars are shining and our hearts are breaking. We set about to build our altars. Building the altar makes life with God right!

Darkness in Deceit

Darkness was heavy when Jacob finally stopped running and rested his head upon a pillow of stone. His heart and mind matched the night as he could not forget his awful deception and having to leave home to save his life. His sleep was filled with dark forebodings as he rehearsed the plan he and his mother had made to steal the birthright from his brother. His human plan was successful.

God had seen it all, and in the darkness of night caused Jacob to dream of a ladder set up on earth, reaching heaven, with angels descending and ascending on it. I suspect that dream would never be forgotten. And there was a wrestler with whom he fought, ending his night a broken man. It was in the dark of the night that God showed Himself to Jacob, declaring the promise He had given to Abraham and his descendants, with the assurance that the plan was still in progress and would be completed. And the voice of God sounded in the darkness!

God's presence was such a reality that Jacob was afraid and called the place dreadful. But he made a vow before God that would bring him back into the presence of his earthly brother whom he had cheated. It would be a meeting of peace, although Jacob struggled with his sense of guilt many years (Genesis 28).

Treasure:

Many vows are made in the stillness of the night, wrestling with God.

Nothing escapes God.

Nothing stops the plan of God. He always has the final word!

God works in all hearts and minds toward His planned end.

He enters even into our darkness of deceit.

Darkness in Despair

Darkness of despair was in their cries, but they found no mercy. They were slaves (Exodus). Death for some of them seemed their only escape. These were the children of Abraham taken into slavery (allowed by God) who for centuries

served the Pharaohs of Egypt. Their cries went up to God day and night, fear and sorrow. God had listened, said it was enough, and implemented His plan. Years prior He had put it into the hearts of a couple with a baby son who was to be killed under the edict of Pharaoh, but instead built a little ark for him, hid him in the Nile River near the palace, placed his sister there to be a part of his rescue, and left him in the hands of God. He was the leader God had prepared for this assignment. His name was Moses.

After many obedient treks to Pharaoh, in obedience to God for the release of His people, but all to no avail, God acted. In the darkness of the night, the wail of death was heard throughout Egypt as God took the life of the first-born in families and in the animal kingdom. It was a night of darkness. The children of Israel were packing, gathering their belongings for the long journey which would soon begin. God's plan had involved the blood of a sacrificial lamb on the doorposts of every home promising that the death angel would pass over those covered by the blood. Those not covered would die. God always has the final say.

Then came the march (Exodus 14). God assigned Moses to lead. Verbally, the Egyptians were glad to see them leave; but when they realized that all the slaves were gone, Pharaoh went after them. Fear gripped the hearts of the marchers, but God moved one of His clouds between them and the Egyptian army of horses and chariots to separate by day. At night, it became a pillar of fire to light the way of the marchers and contain the enemy. At the Red Sea, God used the staff of Moses to open the pathway between waters as all the children of Israel marched through on dry land. As the enemy tried to do the same, God caused the waters to return to normal and

the enemy was killed. Some time later, they sang the Song of Moses.

Treasure:

God is great. He is sufficient for any battle, for the defeat of any enemy. His methods are thorough. He can do miracles when necessary. He can enable His children to do all things and cause His plan to be complete and successful, giving His hidden wealth of secret places for those who trust and obey.

Darkness in a Sinful Heart

Darkness was often in the heart of David, so it runs through the Book of Psalms, in the Psalms he wrote and sang. His life was lived under the divine rescue and heart plan of God. The Messiah to come was to be from David's lineage. Recorded for us in 1 Samuel, we see his athletic prowess, his manly strength and ability to lead, battle, wage war and win. We also see a poetic heart, the gift of music, and special tenderness needed to care for sheep. God equipped David for His plan.

In his life, he became king, general, spiritual leader, a broken-hearted sinner, a fugitive, and a man after God's own heart, his own being humble and contrite. Running through-

out all of this, noted in his songs, there were many moments of darkness when we find David in sleeplessness, in temptation, adultery, murder, and weeping, weeping, weeping.

In 2 Samuel 12, David was confronted by Nathan because he had sinned. He was stricken with guilt and lay all night on the ground. His heart's cries of darkness and sorrow over his sin are in his Psalms. In that position, David cried out to God. Psalm 51 describes his darkness of conviction and repentance.

God's judgment fell. David was shaped by his experiences. This is why He could write his words of worship, praise, and adoration of a merciful God.

Treasure:

All that is described here explains why Christians read the Psalms over and over, why much of it mirrors our own thoughts and actions. David's cries to God become our cries to God. When we read the 23rd Psalm, we take solace and comfort from it. David was a shepherd. Jesus is the Good Shepherd. There is no shadow of turning in Him ... no darkness. When we read "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life" we know it is true for David, true for you and me, treasures that are ours in Christ Jesus. The Psalms of David are very personal. Our God is personal.

Darkness Closing In

Darkness can grip our hearts in the stillness of the night. We may awaken frozen in fear because of a bad dream or memory or thought that intrudes so powerfully we feel it physically.

Maybe in the dark stillness of the night, our phone rings. As we note the time, our hearts are gripped by possibilities, none of which are usually easy thoughts of glad tidings. It seems surreal.

There are times, in the dark stillness of the night, when an event or duty of the next day leaps into our consciousness, or leftovers from worrisome circumstances or events. We are silent with dread.

Or in the dark stillness of the night, we are simply lying in bed, not asleep. We can't seem to turn off the churning of mind and heart as we live a day, month, or year in re-runs. The night is long and heavy. Morning seems and feels far away. Dread wraps itself around certain thoughts.

And in the dark stillness of the night we may find ourselves repenting of things we said or did not say, did or did not do. Nights are sometimes filled with regrets and remorse. (Sometimes in the night, instead of tossing and turning, attempting to change the subjects of our minds, changing positions, looking at our clocks over and over, it seems wiser to simply get out of bed and head for a private place where we can speak to our Father about the troubles of our minds.) Nights can often be times of regret and remorse.

He is undisturbed when we call His name. He is God of mind, body, soul. He knows the conscious and the sub-conscious, He knows when we are restless and why. He is God of

night and God of day. He can speak in our dark moments as easily as in our light ones.

It is in these kinds of moments we learn how dear He is, that what He speaks to us fits perfectly. Sometimes He will put a Scripture in our minds we never knew we had memorized. Sometimes He sings a hymn filling us with a sense of wonder and awe that He knew what we needed to hear.

Treasure:

In our dark and restless times, God is!

“You have visited me in the night; You have tested me and You find nothing; I intend that my mouth will not transgress” (Ps. 17:3).

“I will praise the Lord, who counsels me. Even at night my heart instructs me” (Ps. 16:7).

“On my bed I remember You, I think of you through the watches of the night” (Ps. 63:6).

Songs In The Night:

“By day the Lord directs His love, at night His song is with me—a prayer to the God of my life” (Psalm 42:8).

“No one says, ‘Where is God my Maker, who gives songs in the night?’” (Job 35:10).

“I call to remembrance my song in the night: I commune with mine own heart and my spirit made diligent search” (Psalm 77:6).

During the darkness of night, no song is more welcome, meaningful, and remembered than His song sent to our heart.

God and Israel's Darkness

Years of days and nights had passed as the children of Israel were enslaved by Egypt's rulers—four hundred years, the Bible says. By now generations had come and gone and what was remembered from the past would have been those things shared by parents and grandparents. It would seem that God had forgotten to be gracious, that He had forgotten His plan shared with Abraham, that He had forgotten His promises, but no ... God does not forget, God does not violate His word. Time was one long **darkness**. But we are told that their cries reached our Father's ears and heart, and He drew close.

What did God see and hear during their long darkness?

He heard their cries.

He noted their helplessness.

He felt their hopelessness.

He saw their bondage.

So He embraced them and set in motion a promise made long before. He moved and began to implement His plan. He ordained His delivery. He set about to end their subjection to masters other than Himself. He involved Himself personally. He would be the One to set them free from darkness of life itself.

This is what God always does. He makes His freedom available to the human race. He ends our **darkness** with His plan, His power and might. He removes other masters and sets Himself up in the changes of our hearts, this One who is merciful and good, mighty and strong, longsuffering and patient, whose plan is always good. He becomes the faithful Master and Lord and God and King and we, those of us who

make our exodus from all claims but His, are blessed people. **Darkness** ends and light shines on our pathway.

He hears our cries, notes our helplessness, feels our hopelessness, sees our bondage ... and says to us, **in our darkness**, "Come to Me."

Jochebed in Darkness of Decision

Families were happy as they thanked God for the sons He had given their households. But the edict changed all that. All boy babies were to be killed. Undoubtedly some were taken from their beds, some from their mother's arms, and in the midst of household life, as family watched, these new lives were ended with swords. How could it not have been a **dark time**?

But there was a married couple who had a son, loved like all other sons, but they made the decision to hide him. They would hide him, they said, because he was special. He was hidden and kept quiet which would not be easy, until they could no longer hide him. This is what the Bible says.

And he was a special son (although they may have been describing him with their parental love) from our perspective after the facts. We know God, with His plans, put it in

their hearts to do this; and each step was from His direction, the making of a special basket including water-proofing, and even the placement among the reeds near the bathing place of Pharaoh's daughter (much of which Scripture credits his mother). The whole story was God's arrangement for the ultimate freedom of the children of Israel. God's timing and methods are always perfect.

Isn't it interesting that God chose the palace of Pharaoh as the safest place to raise Moses, to highly educate him for the calling on his life by God, who heard the cries of the children of Israel and had "come down to see." And in God's perfect plan, His own mother was able to nurse him, teach him the songs of Israel, tell him about Jehovah, Creator/God. In the **darkest** days of their history, God was implementing His plan, an awesome plan that would require His awesome power to bring awesome results. It was a dark time in history and homes, a dark time of pain and suffering. God works for His own in any darkness.

What are the treasures of darkness we gather here?

I need to remind myself there is nothing God does not know. Darkness is as light to Him. He knows the laws and edicts and rules and evil power-plays of the rich and famous! It is important to remember that God sees the end from the beginning, that even though I may wonder, I can trust Him because He is God. If I tell myself that all is hopeless, I am wrong. He works within the darkest hours, works in great detail. He does all things well and right, is always in control, and acts upon our trust and confidence in Him. He is God!

A Dark Night in the Palace and the Sleepless King

The palace was **dark** and the palace people were sleeping, except for the king. The king could not sleep, and it entered into his mind to read the carefully written records about his reign as king. I am sure he did not “journal” ... but there were others who wrote, probably at his discretion, so in time to come people would read what he wanted them to know. I would suggest (because of being able to read the end of the story), that God kept the king awake, put it into his mind to read old records, and then a step beyond, to wonder if anything was done to reward and honor such a fine man who saved his kingdom. Now if the king doesn't sleep and has a question, he feels quite free to wake someone else up to find the answer. After all, he is king!

His question was whether the man who had done an honorable thing to protect his kingdom had been rewarded, really publicly rewarded. The answer was “no” from attendants, so the very next day after some discussion with an egotistical man who had a wicked heart (having manipulated his way into the king's employ), who now thought in his own mind that he was surely the one the king would reward, graciously worked with the king to develop a great plan. And the king began immediately to implement it.

The wicked one had given great suggestions, thinking he would be the honored one; but, what do you know! It was his worst enemy the king planned to honor, and he was to be involved in it. He was assigned to honor the man he hated. Well, as usual, the wicked had overplayed his hand. He had already built the place he thought he would be hanging Mordecia, the man he despised; but when the king discovered

Haman was working out a plan to kill the Jews, he himself was hung. And the king honored the one who deserved to be honored.

Treasure here? God never sleeps; and what do we know He is doing on still, dark nights when we lie awake wondering what will happen next, when we are feeling darkness in our minds from worry, worrying because we forget the promises of God. We look upon powerful people and feel fear, forgetting we are God's child, loved in His heart, and never out of His mind. Esther 6-7.

Samuel's Calling in the Still, Dark Night

Young Samuel heard the voice and drowsily went into the bedroom of Eli thinking he had called. When Eli awoke, he told Samuel to head back to bed, that he had not called. Samuel went. He nestled under the covers and dropped off into sleep, but heard the voice again. And once again his feet hit the floor, and more awake this time again walked into Eli's room, to be told a second time (perhaps this time a little irritated?), that he needed to get back to sleep. Samuel went. I wonder now if God had begun to speak to Eli, because for the third time, Samuel heard the voice; and for the third time he

headed for Eli's bedroom, and for the third time shared that he had heard a voice calling him. But this time Eli answered differently. This time Eli told him how to respond if he heard the voice again: "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening."

(Well, let me share a little true story with you ... not really spiritual, but funny and sweet and true.) When our Jennifer was very little, just learning to talk, John and I were driving home from Sunday morning church, and she was in a little seat between us. I asked her what the story was about in her class. Here was her answer: "God said, Sammy, Sammy." So I asked what Sammy said. She responded, "Here is me! Here is me!" She got the message!

And in the Biblical record, in the stillness of that night, we are told that the Lord came and stood and called Samuel again ... using his name twice; and Samuel did respond and said, "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening." God began to share His plans with Samuel, awakened from his sleep, listening to God in the still **darkness** of the night. Samuel's life would never be the same, never the same again. (Sammy got the message!) In Scripture, we are told that "Samuel did not yet know the Lord. The word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him." In our spiritual darkness God speaks personally to us. It is the voice of God that awakens the dead. Remember Jesus when He called forth Lazarus from the grave? It will be so when Jesus returns to earth again and the dead in Christ shall rise to meet with Him. God has always been the giver of life. Until we are awakened by Him to know the Lord because the Lord reveals Himself to us, receiving new life from Him, being newly created by Him, experiencing the new birth, **darkness** describes us. Our minds are dark, as are our hearts. His voice awakens our human spirit. His

message to us is life. His voice is life. And since He is light, our personal **darkness** is penetrated by the One who is the Way, the Truth and the Life. We are never the same. He has much to say to us, much to teach us. He has power to equip us for a life of peace, value, purpose and gives that life to us that will cause others to see Him and desire Him. Along with His awakening comes His call to follow Him, to live in Him and for Him, which is life eternal. May we respond to Him like Samuel, young Samuel: “Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.” May we get the message! (1 Samuel 3).

What are the treasures of darkness we gather here?

God includes children in His eternal plan. He calls them, gives understanding. He plans and calls and shares His plan with us, if we will come to Him and listen!

The Dark Command and the Fiery Furnace

Well, it was not dark in the fiery furnace. The flames were roaring with heat and light, bright light! King Nebuchadnezzar had made a decree that all who refused to bow down to the golden image he had set up for worship would be thrown into this furnace (Daniel 3). He made this decree at the suggestion of jealous men who would like to have had the po-

sitions of the ones they saw would not bow, and felt sure in the **darkness** of their minds that this was the way to dispose of them.

He was surprised at who refused to bow. The very ones he had given major appointments to rule with him in his kingdom: Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, three Jews who believed in God. Well, of course he had to keep his word, make good his threat, since he was king.

You probably remember the rest of this wonderful record kept for our good.

The king reminded these men of his plan and his power, stating in his king's voice that no one could deliver them out of his hand. Three men who were simply doing their job, enjoying life, living in the favor of their earthly authority in life, were now targeted for their faith in the living God.

The ignorance of authority figures is characteristic when God is left out.

The three men answered in trust and in truth, saying that if He wanted to deliver them, He could; but even if He did not, they would still bow to no other God but Him (the way we should trust when deliverance is needed).

So they were "bound" and thrown into the furnace, which was so hot that it destroyed those who did the "throwing." I love the descriptions in this chapter; be sure to read it.

The conclusion of this story is incredible, as is the loyalty and worship, the acknowledgement of God's sovereignty for the three men. The king looked into the furnace and discovered there were four men walking around in it ... one like the son of gods. The three men were released and promoted, and the next edict of the king was that anyone, any people, nation, or language speaking against or dishonoring the God

of these three men, the only One who can deliver in such a circumstance, would be destroyed.

God has said He would never leave us nor forsake us. What fellowship must have been theirs as they walked with Him in the furnace, meant to destroy, but becoming instead the means of close fellowship and causing the world to see the power and might of God, the only God. So, let us live!

Daniel's Dark Den

It is often true that people in authority, worldly leaders, or other positions of authority, have great jurisdiction over the lives of others, and make decisions that are not only foolish, but opposed to the will and purpose of God. It is a consoling truth that God is not unmindful of any circumstances His child is dealing with.

The story many people love, both children and adults, is about Daniel and the lion's den.

Daniel was a good man, actually trusted and highly esteemed by King Darius; but he, King Darius, like other authority figures, are often duped and deceived by others who have wrong and evil motives. These kinds of people had come to the king to say that there were those in his kingdom who esteemed others more than him, who prayed to gods other

than his god, and convinced him to make a law that all who did this must die.

This was a set up for both Daniel and the king, and the end result of this was that Daniel was thrown into a den of lions—the evil, calculated plan being he would be killed, of course.

The Bible says that even as the locks were engaged, the king himself indicated a desire that Daniel's life be spared, which is what he said to Daniel. He told Daniel that he hoped his God could save him. But he must not have had too much hope this would happen, because the Bible says that throughout the **darkness** of night the king could not sleep; and when it was barely daybreak, he made a trip to the gate, where he could call Daniel by name, which he did.

Alive and well, Daniel responded to the king's greeting and said to him, "I am alive, O king. God sent an angel to close the mouths of the lions. I have never done anything against you, O king." The story is recorded for us in Daniel 6. And the end of this story says that the wicked ones were punished.

What are the treasures we find here?

God does not sleep. God works in the night. God is faithful. God knows where we are and all extreme circumstances. God rules sovereignly over earth. God is privy to every form of deception involving His children. There are no secrets God does not know. God's power is greater than any earthly power. We also see that Daniel honored God with his trust and confidence in Him. He honored God by obedience to Him rather than an earthly king ... and God honors those who honor Him!

Darkness in His Servant

In the **darkness** of the night, the Syrians had gathered their forces for attack, their powerful horses, chariots, and a great army. They came during the cover of darkness to surround the city (2 Kings 6). The next day, early in the morning, the servant of Elisha (the man of God) looked out and saw this great army with weapons of war ready for attack. In fear he asked Elisha, “What shall we do?”

Elisha’s response was the response of a “man of God”: “Fear not; for those with us are more than those with them.” Then he prayed. “O Lord, open his eyes that he might see.” And when God opened his eyes, the servant saw the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha. Note that Elisha did not waste time seeking human evaluation for executing ideas and possibilities, nor did he consult with human authorities. He went immediately to the One in charge of our world. God was not his last resort ... but his first confidence!

It is always in darkness that our enemy plans and plots, with secret alliances and powerful dominions. When we become aware of his activity, when we see his power and our position, humanly we can react like the servant of Elisha.

But, as people of God, we are not overlooked or ignored by the God of Heaven. He does not sleep, and He is actively engaged in the spiritual warfare essential for His victorious purposes. While the enemy works in darkness, our God sees and works also. His plan cannot fail. God did not fail in this circumstance and will not fail in ours. May our eyes and those of others around us see our King and His position of victory.

“Darkness hides not from Thee; but the night shines as

the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to Thee” (Psalm 139:12).

“For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ made His light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God’s glory displayed in the face of Christ” (2 Corinthians 4:6).

Kingdom of Darkness

Colossians 1:13-14: “For He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son He loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.” (NIV)

Colossians 1:13-14: “The Father has delivered and drawn us to Himself out of the control and the dominion of darkness and has transferred us into the kingdom of the Son of His love.” (Amplified)

Acts 26:18: “To open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those sanctified by faith in Me.

These statements of Scripture are of awesome value and practical information for the believer. What do we see here?

All kingdoms have kings who work through their personal governmental leaders and offices under the king's control. A king gives orders. His subjects obey his orders and follow his lead and command, because he has their hearts. The kingdom of darkness is controlled by the prince of this world, the title our Lord gave him.

Satan's kingdom is labeled and defined by God as one of **darkness**.

Satan's kingdom dominates ... the word used to define this is DOMINION.

A dominion has power to influence and control.

It is important to see the goal of Satan as described in Scripture: to steal, kill, and destroy.

Everything done under this dominion produces darkness in the world, in nations, institutions, relationships, people, etc.

To move outside of this dominion, people must be rescued.

The Father, Father/God performs this rescue operation.

God moves into our personal darkness.

God opens our eyes to see Truth.

God opens our ears to hear Truth.

God opens our minds to understand Truth.

God opens our mouths to speak Truth.

God does all of this so that we will TURN FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT

God stops the power of Satan in man through His own power, the power of God ... when the Light comes, we receive the forgiveness of sins, because we have acknowledged Truth and asked God for it.

Our life is sanctified in God's presence, set apart for Him; we no longer live in the dominion of darkness but in the

Kingdom of our Lord Jesus, the Light of the world.

All Jesus is becomes ours to have and to hold, as He does the same for us, have and hold. This is our inheritance.

And the prophets and their prophecies in the Old Testament lived in the lands of darkness, lived with human beings with darkened hearts and minds, lived with the dark plots and plans of wicked people, lived amidst the darkness of unbelief and rebellion against God, lived with loss of things held dear, lived with scorn, rebuttals, and reckless wickedness toward themselves. The Bible says the world was unworthy of their lives.

THEN JESUS CAME!

It was Christmas for the world! Light came to penetrate the darkness, to give light to hearts and minds, to shine light on pathways, to give light to the Gentiles. To the whole world he came. He came to set captives free, to heal the sick and the blind, to console the hurting, to feed the hungry, to mend wounds, to build his kingdom with ransomed men and women who would follow in his train. He came to show the world his Father, God!

Light had come into the world, light would be in the heart of every follower no matter the personal cost of building the kingdom of God in taking up the cross and following Jesus!

And when he returned to his Father in heaven, he sent that one who would comfort, teach, guide, empower, working in and through the Holy Spirit!

Wherever He went, He did His Father's will. He obeyed the Father. His life brought light into the darkness of the world and in the pathway of every follower whom He calls "friend."

But in their darkness the world did not want Him!

Darkness in Gethsemane and Calvary

The Powers Of Darkness Gathered...

The Biblical history of mankind is littered with broken laws, broken treaties, cruel and inhumane treatment of others, self-centered lifestyles, destruction of good things and erection of bad things, with worship of the idols of the world. All these are real in high places of governments, and in neighborhoods and homes of families. The Bible says men call evil good and good evil. In God's chosen timing, **into this dark world Jesus was born in the stillness of the night.**

At His birth, **these dark forces were present and publically began their work** evidenced by a world leader of that day, Herod, ordering all boy babies be murdered because He heard the predictions concerning the "star in the East" and the birth of One who would be more powerful than himself. Herod crowned himself and was willing to do anything to preserve his place of prominence and control. His heart was filled with darkness.

"Light has come into the world, but men love darkness because their ways are evil" (John 3:19).

Darkness gathered around the Lord Jesus for the three years He worked to make His Father known. He came to "undo the work the devil had done," and to establish the plan of redemption for mankind. What darkness was present?

Darkness of religious leaders

Darkness of His own people's hearts

Darkness of His disciples

Darkness in the midst of His moments of deliverance for those bound in the powers of Satan with no release

The world was in the dark of night when Light came.

It is into our darkness God comes to our individual rescue and lights up our spirit, mind and heart. When that Light comes and penetrates, night becomes day.

The only hope for our dark world of human society is in Christ Jesus! It was true when He walked in the world He had created, and it is true today!

Darkness in His Death

Who was at the scene?

You may be sure that the powers of darkness were watching in Pilate's hall. Quickly they followed Him to Herod's presence. Aflame with demonic excitement and anticipation, they were delighted when He was crowned with a crown of thorns and dressed in a purple cloak. How they must have incited and cheered those who beat the Savior. They had worked before He was born to kill Him and with great zeal to bring all of this to pass. In great numbers these leagues of fallen angels gathered close to the Cross so they could watch and listen.

Who else would we have seen if we were there?

His disciples slept in the garden ... He had asked them to pray.

Judas, who had sold Him for 30 pieces of silver and then betrayed Him with a kiss (part of the deal).

Soldiers mocked Him and spit in His face, gambled for His clothes and covered Him with a mock royal robe and a crown of thorns for His head.

The crowd gathered to watch and jeer.

The jealous religious hierarchy was there ... (there is no jealousy like that in the hearts of religious people, this jealousy that started with Lucifer himself) ... the Sanhedrin and the court attorneys of religious law were there ... it was remembered that one could be released if a person was crucified ... so they let the crowd choose ... Jesus or Barabbas ... who goes free? **The darkness in the hearts** of the crowd of people responded with:

GIVE US BARABBAS! CRUCIFY JESUS!

Pilot, the representative of the most powerful government of the world at that time, was there. But he was a coward who listened to the crowd. His heart was so dark that even when warned by his wife, he followed the crowd, then washed his hands as though washing his hands could wash his conscience. Poor Pilate had a dark heart!

And they crucified Jesus between two thieves, with cruel mocking

“The LIGHT shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it” (John 1:5).

Behold The Man!

He was born in a stable.

He grew in stature and in word and deed.

He invited the children to gather around Him and sit on

His lap.

He invited men to follow Him.

He healed the sick and caused the blind to see.

He fed the hungry multitudes.

He wept.

He raised the dead.

For all His goodness, He spent His last hours in Pilate's Hall.

And Jesus answered not a word.

“Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.”

And His light shined into the heart of the one crucified next to Him, and he said to Jesus: “Remember me this day when you come into paradise,” and Jesus said to Him, “Tonight you will be with me in paradise.”

And He said, “Father, into your hands I commit my Spirit.”

Deep darkness moved across the land, and the earth shook. The world's Light was in the grave ... days passed.

Then came resurrection. *He is not dead, for He has risen!*
The Light of the world is Jesus.

BEHOLD THE MAN!

A Long, Dark Weekend

One long weekend of **darkness** for Jesus,
The Light of the world, the Light of Life.

One long weekend of suffering for Jesus,
In His love for lost humanity.

One long weekend of submission for Jesus,
To liberate His world from Satan's bonds.

One long weekend of pain, death and the grave for Jesus,
Offering His life that we might live.

One long weekend of sorrow for Jesus,
While His grace poured out upon humanity.

One long weekend for Jesus...

Jesus was prepared for His crucifixion by the Holy Spirit who ministered to Him often, by His time with God's two servants on the Mount of Transfiguration, by the woman who washed His feet with her perfume and dried them with her hair, by the angels sent from Heaven, by the sense of being in His Father's will daily, and their fellowship and communion with each other. He had known from the beginning, having made the commitment while with His Father in Heaven.

Jesus renounced the glory of this world for the dark road of Calvary (Matt. 14). He turns to us: "Follow Me."

Darkness in Disappointment

Darkness of disappointment was theirs as they walked along the road to Emmaus (Luke 24). They expressed the rea-

son. "We had hoped He was the One..." Past tense. Hope now gone. Hopelessness filling their hearts. So true was this that their very bodies moved along aimlessly, heads and hearts down.

Along came One with what they might have thought was a rather stupid question which they answered with a question themselves, in essence, "How could you have been in this area and not know about the crucifixion today, the crucifixion of a man who had done such good things and said many things which we believed." Darkened hearts.

They conversed along the way and the stranger seemed to know some things. In fact, later when they realized who He was, they said their hearts had burned while He talked. (Would that our hearts would burn when Jesus talks to us.)

They were polite in their cultural hospitality, and upon reaching home they invited him in for supper and a place for the night.

He stayed upon their invitation.

It was at the table they recognized the hands, those hands they had seen breaking bread many times. Of course Jesus knew they would recognize Him, and at that moment He left them.

But their darkened hearts had changed to "burning hearts." He knew that, too; and they ran back to Jerusalem, changed men. His presence always moves darkness out, changes people, renews hope, fills with joy, energizes with life.

For us too! And we become changed people, changed forever. Light appears in us, ahead of us, around us. We begin to walk in the Light as He is in the light ... darkness is gone.

Darkness in Disciples

He tried to prepare His disciples, but they were slow of heart to believe; and their hearts were broken when they saw Him hanging on the cross as though defeated. They had thought He would show His power and position, so it was incredible to them that He was actually dying. All felt hopeless that awful night because He appeared helpless. They left that scene with dark hearts. Peter left having warmed his hands by the fire with his heart aching at his personal denial. Judas Iscariot left after knowing he had betrayed an innocent man for money and “went out and hung himself.” Darkness filled the very atmosphere from the hearts that had loved Him. His mother was there with other women. Can we imagine the pain and suffering she felt? Perhaps she remembered the prophecy given her when they took Him to the temple for dedication, and old prophet Simeon told her the day would come when a sword would pierce her heart over this child. This was that day ... in the dark of night.

And there were those who loved Him and had followed His teaching, had seen His caring love for children, His healing of the blind, the sick, and had eaten the bread and fish He multiplied with His powerful hands. Some of these were there during this dark night of horror. Their hearts were broken and hopes dashed to the ground.

Everyone at the crucifixion thought to themselves “it is over” and they heard Him say from the cross, “It is finished.” They must have agreed without understanding. And God tore the veil of the temple from top to bottom. Light from Heaven moved to earth in Jesus.

But on the third day it began to dawn ... not only the

dawn of the day, but it dawned in their hearts that He was indeed God. Light began to shine in their hearts and minds, darkness was gone, and as resurrection came that would change the world forever, they personally saw Him and worshipped. To their deaths they followed Him in the journey He had told them they would travel in this world. "Take up your cross and follow me." Light led them.

And it Began to Dawn

In the mind of the crucifiers: "Surely this was the Son of God."

In the world: Satan defeated. Darkness driven. Curse ended. Power of sin broken. Death defied.

God the Father embraced His world. God the Son paid the penalty, bore the chastisement, settled forever the claim of judgment. Just as Jesus had said from the cross, "It is finished!"

God the Spirit began His new work!
AWESOME GOD!

Darkness in Discipleship

Darkness of terrorism
Darkness of unbelief

Darkness of blindness
Darkness of flight
Darkness of disciples

Final outcome: “Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace and was strengthened. Living in the fear of the Lord and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it increased in numbers” (Acts 9:31) (“Then” indicates the record, after the above darkness.)

Acts 9 is a contrast chapter of **darkness** and light. You might like to study it from this perspective.

We first find Saul, appointed by the government, to be a well known terrorist in his world. He seemed to feel he was doing God a favor, pleasing God in his capture, arrest, and killing of any and all Christians. Being very driven in his mind and authorized by his government, he sent **darkness** on ahead of him, spreading it wherever he went. Christians feared him. He was indeed a man to be feared.

Saul had awesome **darkness** in his unbelief that his mind propelled him to do such awful things, that quite likely he was satisfied in himself and his success. **Darkness** in unbelief is like this for everyone. We become bound in it. How **dark** we become.

In this Chapter 9, God, who is light, confronted Saul. He did it with light and His voice. God used light to bring **darkness** to Saul, a blinding **darkness**. The God of light can also give **darkness**. But all of this was in His control as God created a new heart and a new mind, a new servant of righteousness. God removed the darkness and equipped Paul for His assignment.

The record of Paul’s life, critical for our study, indicates

Paul's confrontation of **darkness** throughout his journey. The **darkness** of spiritual warfare was strong in opposition because of the calling and equipping of God, and the **darkness** of Satanic forces and his dominion of **darkness** dwellers. May the Lord show us the treasures of **darkness** we need to see to help us in our calling. Our world is yet in **darkness** because of sin and those who are followers of Christ also need new minds and hearts, to be made servants of the King, equipped for our assignments. Yes, this is true for us, and our Lord calls us not only out of **darkness** into light ourselves, but also to be His workmen so that others will know Him, whom to know is life eternal.

I would like to share some personal observations and other things with you, many with Scripture, concerning God who gives us the "treasures of darkness" that He promises. These come to us in our walk with Him as we feast on His Word, the Bread of Life, knowing Him better day by day in confidence and obedience and trust. The Treasure above all treasures on earth is Christ Jesus, of course. It is in Him we find hidden wealth for life; His presence makes sacred the places of darkness and pain. Walk with me among these thoughts and let Him give you Himself. Ask Him to enable you to recognize His treasures in your life. He will respond because He is our Father, the God of mercies, the God of Light.

An awesome stillness moves into our being when we know God has spoken, when He has acted, and we recognize His hand and wonder at His loving-kindness. When we see light in the **darkness** and sense His presence, we lose our fear, for we are His child. His hearing and responding to our need is incredible, and we become aware of it. His appearing in our

darkness with His voice and His light is His promise to us, hard to believe: “Goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, etc.”

There is a spiritual and practical educational purpose for trials in our lives. They may not have been sent by Him, but when they come, they will have passed through Him. He has reason and does not explain in advance which can throw us into **darkness**. He has eternal purpose in His design. Light comes when we move toward Him and brings peace and joy with it. He is God.

Someone (I don't know who) said: “I do not need to fear the hands of man when I am in the hands of God.” (The fear of the hands of man brings **darkness**.) “That He would grant unto us that we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of our life” (Luke 1:74-75).

It is His love that breaks the heart, His voice that breaks the stillness, and His light that breaks into the **darkness**. We see Him when He becomes the Savior of our soul, and life is never the same.

“Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you. See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the Lord rises upon you and His glory appears over you” (Is. 60:1-2).

These verses describe the entry of the Light of the World into the darkness of a world without Him, without Light. This darkness describes our world when Jesus came, thick darkness over the earth and its peoples ... but the Light of Glory, Jesus, rises upon us. Darkness is dispelled, Light shines!

While beds are places for sleeping, they are sometimes beds of sleeplessness because of worry, dread, apprehension,

dismal recounting, horrible dreams, aloneness in fears of various kinds, anger, sadness etc. These are nights of **darkness** inward and outward.

“On my bed I remember You; I think of You through the watches of the night” (Psalm 63:6).

“I will praise the Lord Who counsels me; even at night my heart instructs me” (Psalm 16:7). How excellent is the counsel of our Lord, that One who knows I am awake, that One who never sleeps and speaks to me in my sleeplessness. “You have tried my heart; You have visited me in the night; You have tested me and you find nothing evil in me; I intend that my mouth will not transgress” (Psalm 17:3).

God, the Father, watches down the road for His children to come home. Sometimes they are running with delight because He has provided those incredible blessings, surprises of joy, and His child is running with excitement. Sometimes in the **darkness of the night**, when only He can see, His child is coming, stumbling while trying to run, blinded with tears, not sure of his welcome, loaded with guilt and looking with hope for even a little sign that Father is watching. Believe me, God is watching!

“...for there will be no night there” (Rev. 21:25). No night there! No **darkness** there!

Could there ever have been a darker place than the stomach of the special fish God made to swallow Jonah? There was darkness of disobedience in his heart, darkness of recognizing God was angry, darkness of a life and death situation, darkness of inability to control anything, the darkness of a dark place. Here is what Jonah said: “In my distress (the darkness of distress) I called to the Lord, and He answered me. From deep in the realm of the dead I called for help, and you lis-

tened to my cry” (Jonah 2). “Thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress” (Psalm 4:1).

During a dark time in Jerusalem, King Hezekiah set to fasting and took himself to the Temple of the Lord. Bad news had come in a letter. Assyria planned to destroy them. It was not a rumor. Their violent army had already destroyed other nations far stronger than theirs. In human reasoning, fear was justifiable (2 Kings 19). Hezekiah faced the **darkness** of death and destruction for himself and his people. But Hezekiah did the right thing. He went before the Lord and spread the letter out, saying to Him, “Open your eyes, Lord, and see; listen to the words sent to ridicule the living God. It is true, Lord, that the Assyrian kings have laid waste these nations and their lands. They have thrown their gods into the fire and destroyed them, for they were not gods but only wood and stone, fashioned by human hands. Now, Lord our God, deliver us from his hand, so that all the kingdoms of earth may know that you alone, Lord, are God.” In other words, Hezekiah said to our Father, “Read the letter and be the God You are!” God’s people sometimes receive letters of darkness. Hezekiah gives us the plan that works. Head for the temple, the sanctuary, with your cries to Him: “Be God and show Yourself to our world!”

If the Apostle Paul were present with us, he could share extensively his experiences with darkness (Acts 9). His relationship with Christ began with the **darkness** of blindness, as he was confronted on the road to Damascus, as the major terrorist of his day, sending Christians into hiding to escape his death hunts. After new life came to him, he was wholly given over to the calling of God to the Gentile world, to the cities of his time. His life was touched many times by **darkness**

in relationships as fellow workers deserted him, **darkness** in being hunted down like a criminal, **darkness** in prison, **darkness** in trial and awaiting the ruling of the courts, **darkness** in awaiting the carrying out of the sentence. But what did Paul do with the **darkness**?

“The Lord stood with me and strengthened me”(2 Tim. 4:17) “I have learned to be content in whatsoever state I find myself” (Phil. 4). “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course ... and there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness” (2 Tim. 4). Paul’s life was lived as light in the **darkness**. May this be true of us!

It was in the **darkness** of night that Paul and Silas began to sing! Was this a birthday party? Was it in a synagogue, or during a happy Christian gathering? Was it group singing in a meeting for believers to praise Jesus? No, they were singing in a prison (Acts 16). The songs were heard along the dark tunneled hallways. They were singing after their arrest, feeling their wounds from severe beatings of prison guards and others who hated their declaration of the Gospel. In the **darkness** of this prison, Paul and Silas were singing. It awakened sleeping prisoners, sleeping guards, and the holder of the keys. God sent an awesome spiritual awakening in the middle of **darkness** of night, and **darkness** of souls. And the chains fell off, to the horror of the holder of the keys, who was about to commit suicide when Paul and Silas stopped him, assuring him they were still present and all prisoners accounted for. Just as God can do, that holder of the keys became the holder of water, washing cloths, and healing ointment with which He bathed the wounds of the two men, asked questions and received the answers God gives to hungry hearts. It was a night to remember and God made sure we would by

recording it in Scripture. Keep in mind, all of it happened in the **darkness** of night. God is wide awake when His children are in trouble. He knows what to do and does it. He does all things well! **Darkness** does not stop our Father, who often does His greatest feats of victory in the dark.

Thy love to me, O God,
not mine, O Lord, to thee,
can rid me of this dark unrest,
and set my spirit free.

—*Horatius Bonar*

“I will exalt you, Lord, for you lifted me out of the depths and did not let my enemies gloat over me.... Lord, my God, I called to you for help, and you healed me. You, Lord, brought me up from the realm of the dead; you spared me from going down to the pit. Sing the praises of the Lord, you, his faithful people; praise his holy name. For his anger lasts only a moment, but his favor lasts a lifetime. **WEeping MAY STAY FOR THE NIGHT, BUT REJOICING COMES IN THE MORNING**” (Psalm 30:1-5).

Lifted from the depths: We are healed, protected, spared, granted favor for a lifetime.

Weeping? Yes, but rejoicing in the morning.

Our Father cares for us!

Rev. Henry Frost, missionary to China, wrote:

Nothing so pleases God in connection with our prayer as our praise, and nothing so blesses the man who prays as the praise which he offers. I got a great blessing once in China in this connection. I had received bad and sad news from home, and deep shadows had covered my soul. I

prayed, but the **darkness** did not vanish. I summoned myself to endure, but the darkness on my mind deepened. Just then I went to an inland station and saw on the wall of the mission home these words: "Try thanksgiving." I did, and in a moment every shadow was gone, not to return. Yes, the Psalmist was right, "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord."

Rejoice not over me, O my enemies
When I fall, I shall rise;
When I sit in darkness,
The Lord will be a light to me...
(Micah 7:8).

If I say, "Surely the **darkness** will hide me
And the light become night around me,"
Even the darkness will not be dark to you;
The night will shine like the day,
For darkness is as light to you...
(Psalm 130:11-12)

Praise be to the name of God forever and ever;
Wisdom and power are His.
He changes times and seasons;
He deposes kings and raises up others.
He gives wisdom to the wise
And knowledge to the discerning.
He reveals deep and hidden things, He knows what lies
in **darkness**,
in the land of deep **darkness**
a light has dawned. (Isaiah 9)

and praise you, God of my ancestors;
You have given me wisdom and power,
You have made known to me what we asked of you,
You have made known to us the dream of the king (Daniel 2).

A Psalm of David. A song at the dedication of the temple: Joy comes with the morning...

I will extol you, O LORD, for you have drawn me up and have not let my foes rejoice over me.

2 O LORD my God, I cried to you for help, and you have healed me.

3 O LORD, you have brought up my soul from Sheol; you restored me to life from among those who go down to the pit.

4 Sing praises to the LORD, O you his saints, and give thanks to his holy name.

5 For his anger is but for a moment, and his favor is for a lifetime.

Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning.

Prayers for Those in Darkness

Penetrate the **darkness** for those whom I have come to know and love, presently living in the imprisonment of dementia diseases. In your mercy, let them see you and know the joy of your presence and love.

Penetrate the **darkness** of hearts and souls, those with whom I hold conversation who know they are lost. You alone can do this, and in your mercy, move your light of understanding into their darkness of doubt, lost feeling, dismay and at times, dread.

Penetrate the **darkness** of mind and spirit in the one who has always believed that God is the builder, maker, restorer ... the One who repairs us like broken pottery, for which we give Him praise and thanksgiving for the joy this brings into our personal lives (Jer. 18) ... but finds suddenly and definitely that God not only repairs the broken, but He Himself sometimes breaks His child, even those who have been the object of His care. He breaks, He Himself does the breaking (Jer. 19). Darkness begins in the heart with questions about His faithfulness and goodness. Quivering heart, still and dark. The satisfaction of love has changed into wondering, questioning, pain, and confusion. Father, make yourself known.

Prayers for those living in **darkness** of mind and heart who are world leaders, those with authority in governments. Open that darkness with your own mind, Father of light and God of mercies, in whose hand is the sovereign control of every nation and people on this earth.

Prayers for those held captive by religions and creeds and philosophies, whose understanding is **darkened** by the work of Satan and his dominions taking these as his captives for

his ultimate destruction. May God come to their rescue and deliverance throughout the whole world, our Father's world, for whom His Son paid the ransom price, Himself.

Prayers for myself, now seeing through a glass **darkly**. Give clear spiritual insight and understanding helpful in my own journey, but helpful also in the journey of others around me that I help in leading them to you for their personal need of the light of life. Light up any darkness in me with your light, and may Your light penetrate my personal world to your glory.

Darkness in the Womb

In the **darkness** of the womb our Father works. The womb holds a life God is creating in the darkness. His Word has much to say about the womb.

“Even the darkness hides nothing from You, but the night shines as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to You. For You did form my inward parts, You did knit me together in my mother's womb. I will confess and praise You, for You are fearfully wonderful, and for the awful wonder of my birth!

“Wonderful are Your works, and that my inner self knows right well. My frame was not hidden from You, when I was

being formed in secret and intricately and curiously wrought in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed substance, and in Your book all the days of my life were written, before ever they took shape, when as yet there was none of them” (Psalm 139).

“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you. And before you were born I consecrated you. I have appointed you a prophet to the nation” (Jeremiah 1).

A personal story:

John and I had been told that the baby in my womb was dead at nearly seven months of pregnancy. True, we were already blessed with three daughters, but every baby is special and has a place in the hearts of parents. I was surprised when the doctor asked if I could carry this baby full term, even though it had no life. I was told that if I could, it would have a major effect afterwards for healing and restoration of my body back to normal. I was advised there would be a delivery at the end of the pregnancy’s term. With wondering heart, I consented. They were right. This choice eventually resulted in a hospital stay, but out of the doctor’s compassion and mercy I was not placed in the same area where women were giving

birth to their babies, but near the surgical section.

So, in the stillness of the night, the entrance of a lifeless baby took place. When this was over, I was moved to a hospital room, and after a couple hours, John went home to our other children.

As I lay there in the stillness of the night alone with God, of course there were tears, but no anger against our Father. There was no defiant questioning nor railing accusation against Him because of what He did or did not do. No ... none of this, just quiet tears as I expressed my love for Him, my gratitude for the blessings in my life, worship in knowing He was God and I was not. I turned the switch on the night light on my bed, reached to the table and picked up my Bible. I opened it to a passage I had never really, really read in my life. These were the words from my Father:

“Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls... Yet, I will rejoice in the Lord. I will joy in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength, and He will make my feet like hind’s feet, and He will make me to walk upon my high places” (Habakkuk 3:17-19).

And then the tears did flow in the darkness of the night.

“Where there is darkness, light” are words taken from a prayer by St. Francis of Assisi. When our son worked with us in ministry at our conference center and in NYC, one of the songs he used to sing that I still hear with my heart is this deep and earnest prayer of commitment, seeking God’s work in our daily lives. The prayer was set to beautiful music. It is a prayer to our Father that we would be like Jesus. May it be our longing.

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
Where there is sadness, joy.

O divine Master, grant that
I may not so much seek
To be consoled as to console,
To be understood as to understand,
To be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive,
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.
Amen.

A prayer of Isaac Watts (echoed in our own hearts):

My God! in whom are all the springs
of boundless love and grace unknown,

Hold me beneath Thy spreading wings,
'til the **dark cloud** is overblown.

When Life Seems To Fall Apart...

When it seems life “falls apart” for the child of God, when we feel broken into pieces, **darkness** may move into our soul. We must look to our Father. He can handle the broken pieces. Some He tosses in the scrap heap. They never should have been, having had no value or use in His plan for our lives. But all the others, even the tiny pieces, He holds in His hands and re-designs into the very pattern He had in mind when He allowed life to “fall apart” for us.

When our hearts weep because of loss, God holds us close. He knows this painful cross will further all that He has planned.

His work is done with loving care, and death takes place in our inner man. His plan moves on, His best is ours, we are the children of His grace. (le)

Abide with me, fast falls the evening tide.
The **darkness** deepens, Lord, with me abide.
When other helpers fail and comforts cease,
Help of the helpless, O, abide with me.
(So says the composer, Henry Lyte, 1847)

Darkness and Spiritual Warfare

We have a strong and subtle foe whose purposes are **dark**.

With centuries of practice, he aims straight toward his mark.

In league with him are hosts of fallen angels he commands to capture in his awesome power with bondage in our land.

While his methods used may vary, he attacks with deadly power

In angel-light and lion roar ... he knows this is his hour.

He plans his violent strategy, both local and abroad ...

Attacks in open challenge ... the Sovereign will of God.

While centuries have come and gone in history now past,

Our Lord is always victor and His victory will last ... forever (Ie. 2013).

“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, the authorities, the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Ephesians 6).

Jesus Christ, Our Hiding Place

“You are my hiding place; You preserve me from trouble. You surround me with songs of deliverance” (Psalm 32:7).

“You are my hiding place and my shield; I wait for Your word” (Psalm 119:114).

“For in the day of trouble He will conceal me in His tabernacle; In the secret place in His tent He will hide me; He will lift me up on a rock” (Psalm 27:5).

“You hide them in the secret place of Your presence from the conspiracies of man. You keep them secretly in a shelter from the strife of tongues” (Psalm 31:20).

“Hide me from the secret counsel of evildoers, from the tumult of those who love iniquity” (Psalm 64:2).

“Keep me as the apple of the eye; Hide me in the shadow of Your wings” (Psalm 17:8).

“Deliver me, O Lord, from my enemies; I take refuge in You” (Psalm 143:9).

My Hiding Place! By John Andre

You may already know that this beloved poem, “My Hiding Place,” was written by a young man charged with spying and sentenced to death in 1780. Writers at that time have said it is a sad story of one who was in the middle of a situation in which he was helpful to another who was a traitor. The other went free, but John Andre was caught. At Andre’s tribunal an eyewitness, Benjamin Tallmadge, wrote: “I never saw a man whose fate I foresaw who I sincerely pitied. He is a young man of great accomplishment. He will undoubtedly suffer death; and though he knows his fate, seems to be as cheerful as if he was going to an assembly.” John Andre had become a Christian days before his death and wrote the

poem, “My Hiding Place,” as his testimony of faith and trust in our Lord.

Who could have behaved with such peace of mind in the **darkness** of arrest and accusation; who could have had such deep thoughts issuing in this beautiful poem, facing the **darkness** of a sentence to death by hanging, other than one being ministered to by the Father of mercies, the God of all comfort, the One who lights up the **darkness** with His personal presence. That One became his hiding place. Jesus is our hiding place.

Every time I read his story and these words from his heart, “The Hiding Place,” my own heart is taught and blessed . Our Father is the God of all comfort; and when He becomes our hiding place, we are comforted. The words are triumphant and filled with grace, God’s grace. Jesus is our hiding place.

The Hiding Place!

By John Andre

Hail sovereign love which first began
This scheme to rescue fallen man!
Hail sovereign, free, eternal grace
Which gave my soul **a hiding place!**

Against the God Who ruled the sky
I fought with hand uplifted high;
Despised the mention of His grace
Too proud to seek **a hiding place!**

Enwrapt in thick Egyptian night,
And fond of darkness more than light,

Madly I ran the sinful race,
Secure without a **hiding place**.

But thus the Eternal counsel ran;
"Almighty love, arrest that man!"
I felt the arrows of distress,
And found I had **no hiding place!**

Indignant Justice stood in view,
To Sinai's fiery mount I flew!
But Justice cried with frowning face,
"This mountain is **no hiding place!**"

'Ere long a heavenly voice I heard,
And mercy's angel soon appeared,
He led me on with gentle pace
To Jesus as **my hiding place!**

Should sevenfold storms of thunder roll,
And shake this earth from pole to pole;
No thunderbolt shall daunt my face
With Jesus as **my hiding place!**

A few more rolling suns at most,
Shall land me safe on Canaan's coast.
Where I shall sing the song of grace,
And see **my glorious hiding place!**

Darkness in a Child of God

Sins in the life of a child of God produce darkness. The Bible says that we are to walk in the light. When Christ, our Light, is Lord of our life, darkness moves out! So what can cause darkness in my heart even when I belong to Him through the new birth?

1. Pride
2. Personal Ambition!
3. Disobedience from His direction
4. Willful sin
5. More love for the work than for Him
6. Trusting people more than God
7. Lack of prayer
8. Lack of willingness to surrender or sacrifice what He reveals to me.
9. Manipulating people
10. Lording it over others
11. Lack of truthfulness and integrity
12. Living in the domain power of the self-life
13. Comparing myself with others
14. Comparing my ministry with other's ministries
15. Looking for people's confirmation rather than His
16. Trusting people for needs rather than our Father
17. Lack of love for co-laborers
18. Lack of forgiveness for people around me
19. Lack of desire to build up others, and not ourselves
20. Lack of day by day loyalty to Christ.

Biblical remedy: Philippians 2: Entire chapter, study verses 5-9. Isaiah 58: Together with God

“Go out into the **darkness**” the poet says ... but not alone.
“Put your hand into the hand of God.”

This is great counsel for a new year, sometimes darkened in advance by what we do know, sometimes because of what we do not know. But it matters not because our Father knows. We walk with Him.

I said to a man who stood at the gate of the year,
“Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown.”

And he replied,
“Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the hand of God.

That shall be to you better than a light and safer than a known way!”

So I went forth, and finding the Hand of God, trod gladly into the night.

And He led me towards the hills and the breaking of day in the lone East.

—Minnie Louise Haskins (1875-1957)

Darkness in our heart and mind is dispelled by God, just as He worked in the very beginning of our world. It is in His power and heart of love to do so. In Him is no darkness.

His Still, Small Voice...

That still, small voice we love to hear,
Falling upon our listening ear.
That still, small voice that moves the heart,
Dispels our darkness, makes gloom depart,
Gives light for life, to walk His way,
Lifts loads from hearts, turns night to day.

That still, small voice removing fear
while granting peace, says, "I am near".
That still, small voice, when we obey,
Walking with Him in His charted way
Will magnify Him and comfort bring,
Chase away sorrows, cause heart to sing.

Someday that still small voice will call
And we will hear Him and leave all
To go to Him, in Heaven's place.
His still, small voice, the voice of Grace!

(1e11/2017)

Darkness of Imprisonment

Once a follower of Christ has heard or sung the hymn “And Can it Be?” written by Charles Wesley (1707-1788), it becomes a favorite. The lyrics speak of the One who liberates us from the prison of sin, the price He paid for us at the cross, the status of a believer who comes into recognition of his personal condition before the work of Christ. Once we belong to Him, He gives all of Himself and in response we give all of ourselves. The question is real and proper: “And Can It Be?”

The fourth verse:

Long my imprisoned spirit lay,
Fast bound in sin and nature's night;
Thine eye diffused a quick'ning ray—
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;
My chains fell off, my heart was free,
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.

Refrain:

Amazing love! How can it be,
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?

Darkness of Persecution

When **darkness** in our hearts and minds is invaded by Jesus Christ, the Light of the world, He brings us to His Kingdom terms of living. All of us may not face physical persecution, but some will according to Scripture. Darkness changes to the vision of His glory, and we become His in the deepest recesses of our minds and hearts. Darkness cannot stay where Light enters. When our hearts reach this level of love and our minds reach this level of loyalty, we become serious threats to the kingdom of darkness. We are One with Him.

The following was written by a young pastor in Zimbabwe who was martyred for his faith:

I'm part of the fellowship of the unashamed. I live in the Holy Spirit power. The die has been cast. I have stepped over the line. The decision has been made—I'm a disciple of HIS. I won't look back, let up, slow down, back away, or be still. My past is redeemed, my present makes sense, my future is secure. I'm finished and done with low living, sight walking, smooth knees, colorless dreams, tamed visions, worldly talking, cheap giving, and dwarfed goals.

I no longer need preeminence, prosperity, position, promotions, plaudits, or popularity. I don't have to be right, first, tops, recognized, praised, regarded, or rewarded. I now live by faith, lean on His presence, walk by patience, am uplifted by prayer, and labor with power.

My face is set, my gait is fast, my goal is Heaven, my road is narrow, my way is rough, my companions are few, my Guide is reliable, my mission is clear. I cannot be bought, compromised, detoured, lured away, turned back, deluded, or delayed. I will not flinch in the face of sacrifice, hesitate in the presence of the enemy, pander at the pool of

popularity, or meander in the maze of mediocrity.

I won't give up, shut up, or let up until I have stayed up, stored up, prayed up, paid up, preached up for the cause of Christ. I am a disciple of Jesus. I must keep going until He comes, give until I drop, preach until all know, and work until He stops me. And, when He comes for His own, He will have no problem recognizing me. My banner will be clear.

A Personal Story...

John and I had the awesome privilege of directing the conference center of Hephzibah Heights for more than 35 years, which was a part of the Hephzibah Ministry of NYC, until the board made the decision to sell the center to another ministry. There were many spiritual victories won during those years in the lives of people not only from our country but from around the world because of our work with international students and groups of people from other countries. In the course of this spiritual work, this kind of ministry, of course there were many difficulties and much spiritual warfare. A rather minor happening, yet very significant to me, took place many years ago, but never forgotten.

It was in the circumstance of one of these spiritual warfare difficulties that God gave me His personal message, so memorable, in fact, that I have never forgotten it. Being unable to

sleep, feeling the power of **darkness** in the problem, wrestling in my heart between faith in our Lord and the power of the enemy, I slipped out of bed into the little enclosed porch of the cottage that was our summer home. I did not turn on any light, but simply sat in a desk chair in the darkness of the night. Silently I cried out to the Lord Jesus whom I knew was the only source of help.

Within a short time, and in a most silent way, a Biblical phrase moved into my mind and heart. This phrase was, “songs in the night ... He will give you songs in the night.” I sat motionless, knowing this was from our Father. And suddenly, from a tall tree near our cottage, a bird began to sing in the darkness. I knew it was a message from Him ... the Creator of that bird and of myself. He was confirming to me that He could indeed give songs in the night for soul and spirit. He was saying to me that He had heard my prayers and was moved by my tears and He was God.

How could I ever forget this? He came to me out of the darkness of the night.

The Valley of Vision

Lord, high and holy, meek and lowly, Thou hast brought me to the valley of vision, where I live in the depths but see Thee in the heights; hemmed in by mountains of sin

I behold Thy glory. Let me learn by paradox that the way down is the way up, that to be low is to be high, that the broken heart is the healed heart, that the contrite spirit is the rejoicing spirit, that the repenting soul is the victorious soul, that to have nothing is to possess all, that to bear the cross is to wear the crown, that to give is to receive, that the valley is the place of vision. Lord, in the daytime stars can be seen from deepest wells, and the deeper the wells the brighter Thy stars shine; let me find Thy light in my **darkness**, Thy life in my death, Thy joy in my sorrow, Thy grace in my sin, Thy riches in my poverty, Thy glory in my valley.

—Taken from *The Valley Of Vision: A Collection of Puritan Prayers and Devotions*, edited by Arthur Bennett

Darkness in Fruitlessness

One of my favorite accounts in the New Testament having to do with Jesus begins with the story of an all-night fishing trip by professional and experienced fishermen, our Lord's disciples. It was still dark in the very early hours of the morning when back at the shore, a voice they recognized called out to ask if they had caught anything, the question no fisherman wants to hear or answer when nothing has been caught. In the darkness the response across the water was "no." So our Lord commanded them to cast their nets on the other side of the boat. Rather than argue, which probably

came to mind, they did what He said. Result? So many fish that no one could count! In the darkness of fruitlessness, Jesus knows the reason and knows what to do about it. We know neither.

We can learn from this that He is the expert. He is paying attention. He is not absent. He knows what to do. He was there ahead waiting in the dark. In fact, He had a fire started and was cooking breakfast for His “boys,” the word used in one translation. What a breakfast that must have been! I am sure it was fish, probably Jewish rye, and Israeli coffee, don’t you think? And the fishermen were tired no more. As they sat and ate in His presence, it was no longer dark. All disappointment was gone as they once again marveled among themselves about His personhood, His power and loving kindness, tender mercies, consideration, understanding, His ability to make things right. He was the Christ and they knew it. They basked in His presence, felt His joy and delight. It was wonderful. (The Gospels)

Prayer in Darkness

“After He had dismissed them, He went up on a mountainside **by Himself to pray**. Later that night, He was there alone” (Matt. 14:23).

“Very early in the morning, **while it was still dark**, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where He prayed” (Mark 1:35).

Are we able to live untouched by darkness? Is it possible to so organize my life that I will not encounter darkness? Will the darkness of the world around me, my living world, affect me, or can I avoid this? Will I have darkness within? Is it possible to walk in His light and still experience times of darkness? These are good questions.

Our Father tells us in His Word, His Scriptures read:

“When Jesus spoke again to the people, He said, ‘I am the light of the world. Whoever follows Me **will never walk in darkness**, but will have the light of life’” (John 8:12).

“For He has rescued us **from the dominion of darkness** and brought us into the Kingdom of the Son He loves” (Col. 1:12).

“I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me **should stay in darkness**” (John 12:46).

“You **were once darkness but now** you are light in the Lord” (Eph. 5:8).

“**Even in darkness** light shines for the upright, for the gracious and compassionate and righteous man” (Psalm 112:4).

“Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; **when I sit in darkness**, the Lord shall be a light unto me. I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him, until He plead my cause, and execute judgment for me: He will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold His righteousness” (Micah 7:8-9).

“The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He

has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release **from darkness for the prisoners**, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn" (Is. 61:1-2).

These are my thoughts:

1. The whole world groans and gropes in darkness, but Jesus came to be and give His light; and if we walk with Him, we walk in the light He provides us in the midst of this dark world. Darkness does surround us. We will encounter it, but God lights our personal path. That light will affect the paths of others around us who are searching for God.

2. The Bible says: "The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord" (Prov. 20:27). God's life ignites ours. This is the only way our light can shine before others (Phil. 2). We are reflectors. Our inner man should be all light. While all the emotional possibilities are a part of life in followers of Christ, while all earthly burdens may be ours to carry, while trials may come from our enemy, while life may be difficult and complex, while we may have health problems, marriage problems, money problems, career problems, church problems, problems with our children, as part of the human race, our eyes fixed on Jesus, our surrender to His will, our acceptance of those things He allows or sends knowing we are in His plan, will cast away the darkness and bring Him with His light into our hearts and minds along the journey.

3. Jesus faced it all. The Scripture at the beginning of this final chapter describes His secret, His prayer life. He bore the burdens of the world, was heavy in spirit at times, felt disappointment and sadness, and faced death from His beginning of His earthy life; yet the Bible says there was no darkness within Him. It was in His prayer life with His Father, often

all night, always in places away from others, that He found the secret of walking in the light of the glory of the Father. It is true for us, His followers. On His knees before His Father, desiring the will of the Father, living His life with an obedient heart, met with God's delight. Light lit up the darkness of His personal world.

Can this be true for us? We are always learners in this life, and we will find compliance to His teaching and work in us casts off the works of darkness and the power of the enemy to imprison and defeat us.

Jesus renounced the glory of this world for the **dark road of Calvary**. He overcame darkness to give light in our souls.

Darkness was in the Garden when He left His disciples so He could pray as the scene of His death began to unfold. He began His walk to the Cross. We can only imagine the fullness of darkness during His crucifixion. But on resurrection morning, while it was still dark, inside the tomb, He laid aside His burial clothes and came forth. He came forth out of darkness. Light overcame darkness. He defeated darkness.

God invites us to Himself, to enter into His plans, to walk indwelt by His Spirit, to work with Him in building His Kingdom, to choose and follow His will for the long distance run. His Shekinah covers us. His light is ever present as we move ahead. Our soul rejoices and our cup runs over with His goodness and mercy that follow us all the days of our life. When this is true for us, we light up the world around us; and those who have lost their way will move toward that light and find Jesus. Jesus, the Light of the world!

Jesus came into this world with its darkness of religions. Even His chosen people, to whom He personalized His calling, added to His simple knowing and worshiping God such complicated and extensive rules and rituals, burdens to those He had called and set aside to worship Him in a fallen world. It is what He referred to in Matt. 11:28-29 when He gave His wonderful invitation:

“Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, (with darkness of religion) and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”

May we look to Jesus and move from the darkness of religions into life with Jesus, the Light of the world!

ISBN 978-1-948362-29-0



9 0 0 0 0 >



9781948362290

Lois Ewald, December 2019