

Light On Darkened Paths

Darkness has always seemed to be an enemy of man's progress, limiting his day of work to the hours of day light. Darkness has caused much fear and dread based on ignorance and superstition. Once there was a time when only darkness reigned. Then God said, "Let there be light: and there was light". That was the first day of creation and from that day unto this God has been sending forth the light into this benighted world.

However, darkness has also been a blessing in disguise. God knew man needed rest, and that darkness would give him that. Not only man, but plant, animal and nearly all forms of life rest at night in the darkness.

There are three principal forms of darkness. First, physical, second, mental, and third, spiritual. The first we need although we have overcome its handicaps greatly in the last 50 years with modern lighting. The second form we do not need and much is being done to bring the light of knowledge into darkened minds. Indeed, such great strides are being made in enlightening the minds of men today that we are constrained to believe that Daniel's prophecy of old is being fulfilled: "Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased". With the breaking of the atom and the discovery that matter and energy are the same in different forms, it appears as though man has learned the very structure of the universe. The third and last form of darkness, spiritual darkness, is still on every hand, and, it seems to me, is increasing in intensity every day. Every weapon is futile in this battle against darkness except one, that of course is light.

Micah in the prophetic office identifies himself with Israel and enters upon confession and intercession. Here, to me, he brings out beautifully what light will do to darkness. "---- When I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me.----- He will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness." Micah 7:8,9.

Think of three common forms of spiritual darkness. First, the darkness of trial and affliction. All of us, sooner or later, on the journey of

life are thrust into this darkness.

Some of us have ridden in a passenger train through the mountains in broad daylight and suddenly were thrown into total darkness. The train had entered a tunnel. We were surprised and had to stop our reading and soon we were rubbing our eyes and coughing because of the smoke filtering into the car. That is a picture of the Christian who is unprepared in his heart for sudden trials and afflictions. He is not prepared on the inside for circumstances on the outside.

To carry the illustration farther. At other times we have been riding comfortably in a luxurious, air-conditioned, indirectly lighted coach. We enter a long, black, damp tunnel but are hardly aware of it. The difference is, the lights are on, on the inside. The air is filtered and cooled or warmed for our comfort. We are not dependent upon outward circumstances.

The spiritually minded Christian with real faith goes through the darkness of trial singing. "Thy word have I hid in my heart", said the Psalmist. And again, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light to my pathway". The "lamp" gives you light on your daily, near at hand, experiences. The "light" shines down the road of your life to keep you on the straight and narrow way of God's will for your life. "Try me, O God," said David. Jeremiah cried, "But, O Lord of Hosts, that triest the righteous, and seest the reins and the heart." (20:12) If we have not faith (light) when trials (darkness) come to us, it simply indicates we did not have it before the test came. Peter declared, "The trial of your faith is more precious than gold."

When we find in the time of trial our faith lacking, God has permitted it that we may realize that the lights are out, or nearly so, on the inside. Then should we flee to His Word and prayer, for "faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God".

A second form of spiritual darkness is discouragement. It is nothing

less than the sin of unbelief. And who is he who has not found the lights going out in this way. We profess faith in an invisible God, invisible Christ, invisible Holy Spirit. We believe in an invisible heaven with eternal blessings. We walk by faith. "Believing is seeing" we say. Gradually we take our eyes off Christ, forgetting His promises and, like Peter, begin to sink. Why? We begin to walk by sight! We let the lights go out on the inside!

Satan tempts us to look at ourselves. We pity ourselves. No one appreciates what we are doing. "I'm all alone-- the only one-- what's the use?" we say. Even Elijah thought in time of discouragement and unbelief that he was alone and prayed to die. Jeremiah cursed the day he was born. (20:14-18).

I did that once when I was yet in my teens. I had been preaching for three or four years then. A revival meeting had been going on for days. There were no visible results. While on my knees praying, I confessed what a failure I was and finally asked Him to take me home and out of this old sinful world. People didn't want to be saved anyhow. All washed up, finished, done, at nineteen years of age! Then the Lord convicted me of the sins of unbelief, pride and self pity. He forgave me and I took new courage to proclaim the gospel.

Again the only remedy in such times of darkness is to look to the promises of God's Word. Peter went back to fishing when his hopes were shattered by Christ's crucifixion. But a look on Christ's face at the shore of the lake brought him back to fish for men.

Finally, a third form of darkness is that of sin and unbelief. Every unsaved, unregenerated, unconverted soul is in darkness. "And this is the judgment that light is come into the world and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved." John 3:19,20.

This old world is certainly filled with darkness today. With strife revolution, terror, riots, bloodshed, hate, fury, etc., all over the globe increasingly, we see the depravity and darkness of the human heart without Christ.

How thankful we ought to be who have been "called out of darkness into His marvelous light". "For ye were once darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light." So writes Paul to the Ephesian church.

Knowing that men are groping in darkness we ought more earnestly to point them to Christ, the light of the world. We may not be able to save them but we ought to try.

At Tunbridge, England, there is a monument erected to the memory of a group of gypsies. Gipsy Smith, the noted evangelist, tells us the meaning of that monument: thirty gypsies, workers in the fields of hops, were driving rapidly and carelessly, singing and laughing, across a bridge over the Medway, when the wagon crashed into the railing and wagon, horses, and gypsies were thrown into the river.

One young gypsy seized a horse drifting downstream and, mounting him, watched earnestly and anxiously for his mother. At length he saw her and laid hold upon her: but she struggled in such a way that he was not able to save her. When the gypsies were being buried in the churchyard, the boy who had tried in vain to save his mother knelt down in the trench containing the coffins of those who had perished, and cried out, "Mother! Mother! I tried to save you: I did all a man could do, but you would not let me!"

God help us to "walk in the light", "walk as children of light" and "let your light so shine" that others may see Christ in us at all times.