

## LIGHT SHINING OUT OF DARKNESS

**Matthew 27: 19; Luke 23: 39–43; Matthew 27: 54.**

From these Scriptures I hope, with the Lord's help, to show how light shines out of darkness. The apostle says in 2 Corinthians 4, that God commanded light to shine out of darkness, and that He has shone into men's hearts in order that there might be a shining forth now "of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." How great is this fact!

The Lord Jesus left Nazareth and dwelt in Capernaum—a great light shone in that dark city, as it says **in** Isaiah, "The people that walked **in darkness** have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined," chapter 9: 2.

In the histories of believers it will be found that in the time of greatest darkness light shines. So we should not be discouraged; in a sense the very darkness shows that light is going to shine—the darkest hour is that which precedes the dawn. In the history of the Church there has been much darkness. For an extended period before the Reformation there was intense darkness, but then the light shone—light from which we are all benefiting now. So also in the history of souls. Darkness is the work of the devil, but God causes the light to shine out of it. When David numbered Israel it was a dark period, but God spoke to David through Gad; it is said that Gad was David's *seer*. What God has in mind is to bring in light. Through our self-will, it may be, darkness has set in in our souls, but if we are truly the Lord's He has means whereby to reach our consciences, so David was convicted and light shone into his soul. Immediately before Israel's deliverance out of Egypt there was a time of deepest darkness, a darkness which could be felt, but the light of Israel's deliverance followed.

Three persons are mentioned in the Scriptures I read, for whom light shone out of darkness. The darkest hour in the history of this world was that in which the Lord Jesus was taken by wicked hands and crucified. He had walked and served in this scene—shone in it; and now He stood before Pilate to be judged and crucified. The world was doing its best to put out the greatest light. That light had shone in darkness, but the darkness apprehended it not. The world put Jesus to death, but He was raised again and shone more extensively than ever. It was

morally as absurd an act as **if men were** to combine to-day to put out the sun! The Lord was arraigned before Pilate and was **condemned to die**—a dark hour indeed, as **I said**, but light shone out of it.

Men's hearts were in deep darkness. The Lord said to the chief priests and captains of the temple as they came to take Him, "This is your hour and the power of darkness."

The first person called attention to in these Scriptures is Pilate's wife. She had a dream, and God spoke to her soul as she slept. He had done this in other cases before. It is one way that God uses to address men and women. In deep sleep in the night God speaks to men once, yea twice, but they perceive it not, Job 33. But He does get a hearing sometimes. He got one that day from Pilate's wife, and in the dream she suffered. It is important to notice that she *suffered*. She says, "I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of Him." I believe that many who receive light from God and who are counted as Christians are very shallow because they do not suffer at their conversion. It may be that some of us have never suffered on account of Jesus, but Pilate's wife did. He was about to suffer on her account. He, the Just, suffered for us the unjust, that He might bring us to God, 1 Pet. 3: 18. Her sufferings were trivial; His were infinite. She "suffered many things." One might ask, What did she suffer? We may be sure she did not sleep comfortably, and it was because God would enlighten and bless her soul. If God works with us there will be suffering on account of Jesus. This prepares a good soil for divine developments in us, and it enables us to appreciate what He suffered for us.

Pilate's wife does not say that the Lord suffered for her, but **that she** suffered because of Him. From the way the Spirit of God speaks of her one cannot doubt that she was converted and so would know afterwards that He suffered for her. No one can know forgiveness unless he knows that Christ suffered for him. "He bore our sins in His own body on the tree." We offer you this Saviour.

I would point out that Pilate's wife called the Lord Jesus "a just Man." Nearly everyone in Jerusalem said that He was unrighteous and ought to be killed as a malefactor, but she said to her husband, who was about to send Him to the Cross, "Have thou nothing to do with that just

Man.” What a testimony for Pilate!—especially as his wife had said that she suffered because of Jesus. No doubt he would ordinarily have complied with his wife’s request, for he would have freed the Lord if he could; but he represents a man to whom testimony is presented and who *refuses* it. Instead of accepting the testimony of Jesus he refuses it and puts Him to death. **He** puts himself on the side of the lost, for we could not think of Pilate as saved. The washing of his hands did not make him innocent or righteous. That is what I had to say about Pilate’s wife. She called Jesus “a just Man”—she suffered because of Him, and she testified to His righteousness to her husband, who was already on the judgment-seat. When Pilate is brought before the throne of God he will remember that: He will not be able to deny it. The same applies to us: if we reject Christ now we shall have to answer for it before the throne of God. Many meetings at which you were present will come before you then; many gospel booklets which you have read will come to your remembrance. Will you now, like Pilate, still reject the testimony? God presents Christ to you as a Saviour, **Who, as** you call upon Him, saves **you**: for it is written, “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved,” Rom. 10: 13. It is a solemn matter **if** there is one here who has not confessed the Lord. This meeting will come before you at the judgment-seat of Christ. Pilate’s wife shone out in that hour of darkness in testifying to the righteousness of **Jesus**.

In Luke 23 we have another light shining out, and that only a few hours after the events of which we have been speaking. The two malefactors were hanging, one on each side of Jesus. What a picture! Three men hanging there, enduring the most excruciating suffering, and One of them was righteous. The fact that He was there makes the scene darker outwardly; and as if to add to it, one of the thieves reviled Jesus. Another evangelist tells us that both the thieves reviled Him, which shows, as compared with what we have here, how quickly the work of God can take effect in a soul. One moment the thieves were mocking Jesus; and the next, one of them was calling Him “Lord.” Pilate’s wife confessed Him as “a just Man”; the thief called Him “Lord” a moment after he had been reviling Him. He changed his mind. What caused him to do so? The Spirit of God.

To be converted to God is an instantaneous thing and often happens in gospel meetings. That is what they are held for. “The wind bloweth where it listeth.” It is blowing to-night; you may be converted as you sit there. It was so with this thief—a glorious ray of light shone into his soul as he hung by the side of Jesus. What joy it brought to the heart of Jesus! And if one turns to Him from the world to-night it will afford Him great joy.

I am sure there was never a moment more important to heaven and to earth than the one before us. This blessed Man was put to death with malefactors, and for three hours there was darkness over all the land. But light shone in in the conversion of the thief. His glorious confession was taken account of in heaven: there was “joy in the presence of the angels.” I would urge you to-night to confess the Lord Jesus. You will give great joy to His heart, as I said, and to the heart of everyone here who belongs to Him. The thief asked the Lord to remember him when He came into His Kingdom, but the Lord says, as it were, I will do something for you *to-day*—“To-day thou shalt be with me in Paradise.” He was to leave his suffering body and enter into Paradise and be there in the company of His Saviour. He went straight to Paradise. What a Saviour! What a salvation! Note here that Jesus was not dying a natural death; He died in power. He cried with a loud voice and gave up the ghost; He died before the malefactor. Jesus stayed long enough on the Cross to make propitiation. He cried aloud, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” and He gave up **the** ghost, He says, “I lay down My life of Myself.” He did not die the same death as the malefactors. When Pilate sent he marvelled to find that Jesus was already dead, and so no bone of His body was broken. The malefactors were not dead so the soldiers broke their legs. Jesus entered Paradise *before* the malefactor.

The third person I wish to speak about is the centurion. He was a military man on guard over Jesus. That is to say, he was an officer in charge of some soldiers who were keeping guard by the cross. He represents the authority of Rome. Is it possible that such a man is to be converted? Yes, God can convert a man in military uniform. If he can convert and take to heaven a malefactor, He can convert a centurion. The soldiers with him were not insulting the

Lord; fear came into their hearts, Matt. 27: 54. Could you have stood there without fear? Are you not afraid now of missing the opportunity of being saved—are you not afraid of the consequences? The centurion had had to do with the death of the Son of God. Is that a light matter? The centurion did not think so. When he went out from Jerusalem to Golgotha he was not afraid; doubtless he had seen men put to death before, without giving much thought to their sufferings, but see the change now! “They feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God.” Maybe your parents are converted, and your sister and your brother— they have been affected by what is presented here: **is** it nothing to *you*? The centurion was greatly stirred; he saw the earthquake and what followed, and he feared greatly. “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” These military men in the presence of Jesus change their countenance, they become serious, they say, “Truly this was the Son of God.” They are confessing *the Son of God*. Only the Son of God could produce such a result. So we see Jesus confessed as “a just Man” by Pilate’s wife, as “the Lord” by the thief, and the “Son of God” by the centurion.

Thus in an outwardly dark scene we have, so to speak, a galaxy of stars, radiating heavenly light, suddenly appearing. By the work of God light as to the glorious Saviour, who was that day undergoing His atoning sufferings of Calvary, came to these persons and they made this three-fold confession as to Him. Will you not now join in this confession? As the gospel is presented to you there is at this very moment the immense opportunity open to you of confessing Jesus as the just **One** who died for you, as the Lord, enthroned in heaven, and as the Son of God, who has annulled death, and whose voice now appeals to **you**, that you might live. May **God** grant it!

**J. Taylor.**