

S. N. Sp. 28, 74 A. M. (May 11)
Brenton Aug 16, 87 A. M. ✓
Grove Park Sept 10, 89 AM ✓
Lake Drummond, May 19, 96 AM ✓
North West Feb. 27, 2000 ✓

THE DARK MILE

Psalm 23

Dr. Richard Hutton, a great preacher and writer, told a most interesting incident. He was traveling in Scotland and sometimes, traveled on bicycles - sometimes on horseback, but most of the time they walked.

Inquired about Lake Lochy, Lochy -

The innkeeper answered, there is another way - but no one goes that way by choice. It runs through the "dark mile" - which is a deep gorge. I inquired why they called it the "dark mile" - well, it is just what the name implies. It is gloomy, dark, frightening, big over-hanging ledges of rock, dripping water all the time. There is just a thread of a path through it. And the vegetation is pale and dwarfed. The whole thing is forbidden - stay out of the dark mile. For I repeat, nobody travels it by choice. L. D. Casaway - with right

Dr. Hutton continued, I guess that there is some of the boy in us after we are grown. For my companion nudged me, and then asked the innkeeper to show us the path to the dark mile. We found it about as he described it. In the very bottom of it, my companion grabbed me by the arm, pointed straight up, and said - look up, you can see the stars in broad daylight. Then he said, I remembered the old saying, "when it is dark enough - you can see the stars." We picked our way along through the gloom and suddenly we came out of the gorge and there spread out before us and surrounded with mountains was beautiful Lake Lochy. Both of us gasp at the never to be forgotten sight. Then my companion spoke in subdued tones. I don't believe that we would ever have appreciated the beauty of Lake Lochy if we hadn't have traveled the dark mile.

When I read that story, I thought about the important points in that story. And then my mind traveled to the 23rd Psalm. If you remember, he said, no body

travels the dark mile by choice. And then he said, when it is dark enough, you can see the stars. And the third thing he said, we never would have appreciated the beauty of the lake had we not traveled the dark mile.

Now as I think about that incident and think about the 23rd Psalm, I think we can use those three sentences and put them together and find some great truth for us this morning. Because every man has to walk the dark mile and the dark day. In the 23rd Psalm David says that God renews him - that it is that he leads him everyday in the hard grind. And this is a part of the Christian life. The duties that we have, the burdens that we have, the battles we must stand up to the struggles along the road.

Just as the shepherd did, not leave his sheep, by the quiet waters - but he guided them actually through the dangerous mountain gorges and he never hesitated to be looking for enemies that might be hidden in the dark.

Knowing this, we come to appreciate that God's great goodness during the faithfulness that he has toward us. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death. A deep shadow. Here is the picture of experiencing sorrows, distress, pain, anguish, heart-breaking heavy loads. The good shepherd knows and understands as a faithful shepherd he must lead his sheep, through these experiences. And sorrows will have their place in all of our lives. There are those moments - those hours of grief that will come -- disease, disappointment, active opposition of Satan, and these dark valleys when we travel through life.

V.H.
Danger - To try to leap a chasm in a jump
Joint checking Account - A device that permits the wife to beat you to the draw's

I. NO BODY TRAVELS IT BY CHOICE

Dr. Hutton said, the innkeeper told them that this was not the easiest way.

Moses was thrown into his cart, but when he killed the Egyptian, he had to flee the court of Pharaoh. His second dark day came when God told him to go back to Egypt, face Pharaoh and lead the children of Israel out of Egypt. I am sure the old organization stood out all over him when he stuttered and said I cannot do it. He found himself in another dark pile when the Israelites came to the shore of the Red Sea. And then he saw the huge clouds rising in the rear as Pharaoh's chariots and horses, and soldiers bore down upon them.

I once heard a humorous version of this - perhaps you have heard it. About the Red Sea. A little boy came home from Sunday School and his father asked him about the lesson that day. The boy told him that the children of Israel crossed the Red Sea. His father said, tell me how it happened. The boy's eyes sparkled. Well, he said, the teacher said Moses and the children of Israel got into a trap. They came up to the Red Sea and there wasn't any bridge and the Army was chasing them - so Moses took his walkie-talkie and called the engineers and told them to come quick and put out some pontoon bridges across the Red Sea. When they had the bridges in place, then the children of Israel marched across without getting their feet wet. When they got on the other side, they began to sing, shout, and celebrate. One of the Israelites touched Moses on the arm and pointed back to the bridge, Pharaoh's army was marching across it. But Moses grabbed his walkie-talkie and called for the demolition squad. They came on the double, blew the bridge up, and Pharaoh's army got drown. The father tried to keep a straight face. He said, son, are you sure that's the way the teacher told that story.

The boy looked down at his shoes and he mumbled, well, not exactly. But Daddy, you never would believe it the way she told it.

And through life, many times we go down into these dark valleys - not of our own choice or our own choosing.

Moses was pushed into his dark day and mile when he killed the Egyptian and had to flee the court of Pharaoh. His second dark day came when God told him to go back to Egypt, face Pharaoh and lead the children of Israel out of Egypt. I am sure the cold perspiration stood out all over him when he stuttered and said I cannot do it. He found himself in another dark mile when the Israelites came to the shore of the Red Sea. And then he saw the dust clouds rising in the rear as Pharaoh's chariots and horses, and soldiers bore down upon them.

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But suddenly, in skies so clear and full of light,
The clouds fell thick and fast, the days seemed changed to night;
Instead of paths so clear and full of things so sweet,
Rough things and thorns and stones seemed all about my feet;
I scarce could travel on.

I bowed my head and wondered why this change should come,
And murmured -- "Lord, is this because of aught I've done?
Has not the path been full enough of pain and care?
Why should not my path again be changed from dark to fair?"
But I still traveled on.

I listened -- quiet and still, there came a voice --
"This path is mine, not thine, I made the choice;
Dear child, this service will be best for thee and me,
If thou wilt simply trust, and leave the end to me."
And so we traveled on.

How many of us need to be encouraged in these heart breaking dark shadows
when the sun refuses to shine and the tears flow, that thou art with me. Why
should I fear when he is near and he walks before me. He knows the way. He knows
the pitfalls - the darkness that is there.

Nobody travels this Dark mile by choice

II. WHEN IT IS DARK ENOUGH - YOU CAN SEE THE STARS

Now this is what the old Dr. Hutton discovered down in that gorge, that day
in the darkness. And this is something that the Psalmists presents to us. You

will also find this in first verse, chapter 6 of the book of Isaiah. In the year that king Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting upon the throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Apparently Uzziah was Isaiah's idol. (His death) spoiled Isaiah's plans for life. It was a dark day for Isaiah. Then in some way God revealed himself. How we wish the great old prophet had gone into more detail. He did however give us one picture - that this world needs. The vision he saw was a picture of God on a throne. High and lifted up. He saw all of the Heavenly hosts. Bowing before God. And offering worship. It was a picture of God in his authority.

Is it possible that sometimes preachers over emphasize the love as the greatest attribute of God and minimize so much his great authority. When it was dark enough, Isaiah saw God as he really was. A God to be worshipped, obeyed and loved. And a few sentences later in that chapter, God asks whom shall I send and whom will go for us. Then Isaiah said, here am I, send me.

Jesus said to his disciples if you love me, you will keep my commandments. Do you think of God in terms of love and authority. Have the words of Jesus, "he that loves me, will keep my commandments" sunk into your soul. Do you accept his authority without unquestioned obedience.

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In Jer. 32:7, we see the most daring bit of faith on the part of Jeremiah as he illustrates for us what needs to be done in the dark times. And if you are able to look and see - you'll see the stars. For truly, he knew that God was standing watch in the shadows and keeping watch over his own. Jeremiah was a prophet of hope when everything else was crumbling and everything that was nailed down - was coming loose. This was the last months of the kingdom of Judah. In the final seige of Jerusalem. There was unspeakable suffering, the wall had been broken. Men were dying in prison. And a large group of the population taken captive. But Jeremiah stayed in touch with God in that dark hour and he set an example of hopefulness and he even received visitors in prison and transacted some

V8-9

business. He bought a piece of property and paid 17 shekels for it. A small price to pay for a home place. The real estate values were at rock bottom. And there were few men, if any, who heeded the word of the Lord. But with the deed signed and sealed, and one copy put in a jar and preserved, and one copy given to the buyer - Jeremiah, This was so that everybody in Jerusalem would know that he had confidence and faith in God in that dark hour.

V.15 Houses, fields, vineyards shall be possessed again in the land. When it is dark enough, and men have faith enough, they can see the stars.

III. TO APPRECIATE THE BEAUTY, YOU HAVE TO TRAVEL THE DARK DAY OR THE DARK MILE

The old preacher said, that he never would really have appreciated that lake, had he not traveled that dark mile.

School Teacher's Bible - Did this work - found Beauty in Darkness

One man said he was here on he appeared to disciples when would believe the nails and side - I will with them, Je be with you." hand and pre and said, my



God Is Near

By James Dillet Freeman

If you have eyes to see And you have ears to hear, You can catch a vision of beauty When all the world looks drear. You can be full of music Although you can't even sing, And you can fly as high as the sky Without any need of a wing. It isn't signs and miracles That tell you God is near; You only have to look in your heart To know God holds you dear.

just one hour, while resurrection. When he appeared to the a they told Thomas, they hands, the prints of d thrust my hand in the were within, Thomas midst and said, "peace r, touch my hand - your leiving. Thomas answered

Hand 9396 -

I think Thomas saw Christ in all of his glory for the first time. All of the disciples had just walked through the darkest mile and the darkest day of their lives. Apparently, for the first time, they saw Jesus as the son of God and the Saviour of the world. It was after this that the master said to them - go into all the world and tell this story of God and his love.

*Imagine a world before electric lights - Candles only source of light
it's a dark world - children go to bed hungry*
Now ever since that day, there has been no escape for most of us - no way around

the dark shadows of life.

*Motto: "Better to light one candle than to curse the darkness"
Those who do good in dark world,
Candle goes off in winter ice storm - we stumble, find match, candle*

IV. THERE IS NO ESCAPE - WHAT MUST WE DO

V.P. Goodness of mercy follows
First, we must prepare for this dark day in life. We must remember to place

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Carl Bates, pastor of First Church, Charlotte, N.C., invited Ben Fisher to speak to those attending a deacons and wives' banquet. Fisher, formerly executive secretary of the Southern Baptist Convention's Education Commission, had retired from that position when he discovered that he had cancer of the prostate. He wanted Fisher to share some of his famous mountain humor and then close with a serious thought.

Ben kept the audience in stitches for 25 or 30 minutes. Then he said, "I am a mountain man, and when this thing happened to me, I said to Sally, 'I want to go back to the mountains where I grew up. I want to go to the old country church.'

"So we made our plans to do so. It is behind or across from a power impoundment for the water for one of the rivers in our state. We drove in our car as far as we could go and then walked across a footbridge . . . They came with a wagon from the other side so we could go to the little church down there.

"Then I wanted to go to the little churchyard cemetery nearby. I slipped off by myself. I went out there and began to read the names and dates and inscriptions on the tombstones. I remembered and I lived all over again some of the experiences God had let me have.

"I thanked him for this one whose

name was on a tombstone. He was my Sunday school teacher. He led me to Jesus. I bowed my head and thanked God.

"I was ready to go and my attention was attracted to a small marker. It must have been a child, and I stooped down, brushed away the moss and read the words, 'The Shepherd will return for his lambs some day and the valley will bloom again.'

"God's timing is unpredictable. But it is absolutely dependable. He will return for his lambs and the valleys are going to bloom again. That is a part of God's prescription for your predicament."

As I read this story in the Biblical Recorder, I thanked God for his promises—and for Ben Fisher's faith in his time of physical crises. The fact is that whether we are physically well or incurably sick, we all live in the shadow of impending death. How comforting it is to hear the words of Jesus: "I am the resurrection, and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die" (John 11:25-26).

Yes, "The Shepherd will return for his lambs. . . ." Thank God.

Schedule

- Sept. 4-5—Annuity Board, Dallas
- Sept. 7—Southern Temple, Oklahoma City
- Sept. 9—Convocation, OBU
- Sept. 10-14—Revival, Grace Church, Durant

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work." Less than 3 years later, Winstanley was called back to the lighthouse to help supervise some repairs. While he and his party were in the lighthouse a terrific storm blew up in the North Atlantic. He was certain that his workmanship would stand the battering forces of the sea, and he refused to leave - chosing to ride out the storm. In the dead of the first night, the foundation of the lighthouse began to crumble. In minutes the entire structure was swept into the sea. It carried the proud architect and 9 other men to their death.

Years later a new Eddy Stone Lighthouse was erected by John Smeaton. A leader in civil engineering. He found a new sight for the lighthouse, dug deep to build a foundation on solid rock, a sincere Christian - he chistled this inscription on the corner stone. "Except the Lord build a house, they labor in vain that build it."

And so for nearly 200 years, the Eddy Stone Lighthouse, the second one to be built has stood every test. No storm has been able to shake it. It is founded upon a rock.

V. 6
In preparation for the dark day, we need to make the preparation in our lives as the Psalmist who challenged us to know that surely goodness and mercy shall follow us all the days of our life, and thou wilt dwell in the house of the Lord forever. But here we have a gracious guide.

— Second thing we must do is make friends with Jesus who is the light of the world. It is the way to meet the dark days and the dark miles that we have to walk. You remember that when Jesus went back to his home in Nazareth, he stood up and read from the Scripture, from the book of Isaiah. He opened the book and he read the spirit of the Lord is upon me. Because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor, he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and to recover the sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, and when he finished reading he said - this day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears.

Luke 4:17-21.

It is just wonderful that Jesus stated that a part of his great mission was to walk through the dark miles with people who would follow him. He did not say it is here only. But again he confirmed the same promise to his disciples as they were carrying out the great commission. Lo, I am with you always. The dark days will not be nearly so dark and gloomy with the sweet assurance that Jesus is with you.

*Our Dark World - The gift of Bethlehem!
The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light*

Fanny Crosby wrote from the heart the songs her eyes could never see. For she was blind. Tragedy struck when she was just a few weeks old. Her sight was accidentally destroyed in 1820. She might have grown up bitter and complaining, and cried about the empty black void in a sightless world. Where everything was dark.

But in this child's heart was the sound and the melody that was going to increase. She received her education in New York, in the institution for the blind. Now what could a blind girl do - what use would she be. Why was she born. It seems that God had a mighty work for her. She had inside her heart and beyond the reach of any eye, rest the great love of God and she was going to express it in song.

And so to those sightless eyes and the unseen world about her, she wrote, I am thine, Oh Lord. And then will Jesus find us watching. She also penned that favorite - Jesus Is Calling. Pass Me Not and Near The Cross. Plus, Rescue the Perishing and thousands more as she bubbled forth.

Miss Crosby signed a contract and produced three new hymns a week. Three new hymns each week, mind you, and kept up this fantastic pace of 150 new songs each year for many years.

*Died 1915 age 95 - left wonderful legacy -
"you thought walk 'Dark mit' valleys of Death - fear no evil!"*

X
Now countless thousands of folks have been drawn closer to God because of the beauty of the songs composed by Fanny Crosby. For music is often the bridge which unites man with his creator. When she died in 1915, at the age of 95, she left behind this great, wonderful legacy - Through the eyes of faith and the words of love. Because she saw God and his purpose for her life. I wonder if you can do as well. Yes, she knew how, as the Psalmist says, yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me. Thy rod and thy staff thou comfort me.

X
I close with this story of Dr. John McNeal, who tells of his boyhood days in Glasgow, Scotland. He says that he used to leave the store late at night and make his way across a rough section and a deep ravine. Robbers and dangerous men hide themselves in this spot to seize defenseless people, and take their money. He said one particular evening he was scared almost out of his wits. He made his long journey alone. Suddenly he became conscious of someone walking along the narrow path. He backed up against the over-hanging rock and flattened himself out as thin as possible, hoping that the man might pass without recognizing his presence. His little heart was pounding, and suddenly he heard the voice shout - John, John - without a moment's hesitation he threw himself forward and wrapped his arms around the man who had called. It was his father. John filled his heart with joy as fear fled. No one could harm him now. The two walked together along the narrow path - toward the humble home. Instead of fear and trembling and panic, there was joy and confidence.

Surely he understood what David meant - when he said, yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death. How can these things be. Because of the love of God for us and the sacrifice of Jesus. The real ground of our redemption is that he died for us and rose again. He is our shepherd. He will guide us and lead us in our needs.

Mama died My Bro. said to me!
-12- "live for my self friend" Dave Mike

Can you say the Lord is my shepherd. In all of the uncertainty and the darkness of this hour. Do you dare to go out into the unknown without the eternal shepherd. Have you ever met him. Did you meet him in your youth. What a pity. The father's presence awaits you and he will walk with you on your way home. Why blunder along when he wants to guide you and help you.

Late Last Night - Hospital Room - Phantom wife - Travis took Mike -
Children concerned -
So I go on not knowing
I would not if I might
I'd rather walk with God in the dark
Than to walk alone in the light.
I'd rather walk with him by faith
Than to walk alone by sight.

took her hand - Pray for her -
comfort -
stirred - eyes closed in
Peaceful sleep -
This A.M. Crowned
through valley

V.6 Lord's House - Swing goodness, Mary Zettow - Not Tag along, but overtakes
Bliss him as long as for now

Dr. & Minister - Woman's house - low - Dark Mike -

Dr. - Frank done all, we make comfortable & you talk about her soul.

she - she's happy in Lord - going through Valley.

Minister, do you see anyone with you in Valley?

she grasped his hand, with peaceful smile over her face, whispered "yes"

That her last word - Lord!

As Dr. & Minister rode home - Dr. it has been a joy to me to be with you too

I've been brought to realize something as never before.

Minister & what's that?

Dr. it has been that when friends & some ones have gone as far

as they can go with their Christian dear ones, said he,

There is someone from the other side who takes them up.

That woman was not alone as she went through the Valley of that

Poem

September 23
Thursday

WE ARE NOT ALONE

READ:
2 Kings 6:8-23

**Do not fear, for those
who are with us are
more than those who
are with them.**
—2 Kings 6:16

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:
□ Ezekiel 40-42

opened the eyes of the young man," he saw an amazing sight (v.17). God had arrayed an invisible army "of horses and chariots of fire" all around Elisha, ready to protect the Israelites from the Syrian army.

As God's children, we can trust Him to defend us as we do His will. Even when the battle seems too great and it appears that we face defeat, we must still trust the Lord. We can be encouraged by remembering Elisha's message to his servant: "Those who are with us are more than those who are with them" (v.16). We are not alone! —MRDII

I have promised you My presence

With you everywhere you go;

I will never, never leave you

As you travel here below: —Rose

**WE MAY FACE SITUATIONS BEYOND OUR RESERVES
BUT NEVER BEYOND GOD'S RESOURCES.**

In the New York City subway, two youths robbed a well-dressed man who appeared to be asleep in his seat. Suddenly the whole car came alive! The victim turned out to be a decoy, and the passengers who jumped up from their seats were police officers. With lightning speed they converged on the young pair and made the arrest. These officers were "unseen" at first, but they provided ample security for riders on that subway car.

We get a similar picture of protection in 2 Kings 6. In a manner more dramatic than what happened on that subway, Elisha's servant saw why his master could be so confident in the face of what seemed to be impending disaster. We read that when "the Lord

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