



Lost In The Light

PRESENTED

by

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LOST IN THE LIGHT

"And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? . . ."

Acts 8:30, 31

A veteran Washington correspondent of the London *Daily Express* was glad to get away from the United States again at the end of his last assignment here, and he said so in very strong language. He really gave us the back of his hand. He called America "a great swarming ant-heap of a country," in the "jumbo swirl of riches and plenty," with "unending masses of people dressed up in clothes so increasingly fantastic that life at times seems to be one long fancy dress party." He complained bitterly about our "costs and prices which have long ago taken off like misguided missiles, the careless gunplay of trigger-happy cops, millions of tranquilizer pills, (and) psychiatry run riot." And he summarized his feelings with this grand flourish: "It's all here, heaped up and overflowing and TV'd and air conditioned and superautomobiled and stylized and remotely controlled and five way stretched and jumbo sized and fabulous. . . . Everything is painless and effortless and often brainless . . ."

Well, that certainly makes us look like a land of lost souls. And, of course, we must confess that the latest figures on our pill consumption would tend to confirm that opinion. Every day we swallow 45 million aspirin tablets, 20 million sleeping tablets, and 20 million wake-up tablets. And in the course of a year our doctors write 40 million prescriptions for tranquilizing drugs. So it seems we need pills to put us to sleep, and

pills to wake us up, and pills to keep us going from the one to the other—to say nothing of all the liquor we use to wash them down. And then, oddly enough, we talk with great indignation and alarm about those pitiful dope addicts, and the wicked peddlers who tyrannize them.

There is no doubt that something is radically wrong with modern civilization as we see it here in the United States. But what about the rest of the world? Is it any better in other countries? Do they have any right to look down their noses at us? Aren't they betraying themselves when they do? They may not be fat and fancy and fabulous, but they are just as frustrated as we are, and just as fearful, and just as foolish. We may be losing our souls in the midst of plenty, but they are losing theirs in the midst of poverty. And there isn't a great deal of difference between those two. We may not be happy with all our riches, but evidently they are not happy without them. They are quick to take everything we give them, and then they not only want more but they even condemn us for having so much more to give.

All of this only serves to prove that we are all pretty much alike on this score. The fact that we all want so much, whether we have it or not, reveals how desperately poor we are at heart, all of us. We are all trying to satisfy the deepest longings of our souls, but we don't know how to do it. We are spiritually hungry, so we fill our stomachs. We long for peace, so we take pills. We crave security, so we go out and make money. We demand relaxation, so we get drunk. What incredible nonsense! What it really comes down to is that we need God, but we worship the devil; we need heaven, but we take hell; we need salvation, but we love sin. No wonder this is often called a lost generation—and in every land.

But that's not the worst thing about us. We are not only a lost generation, but we are lost *in the light!* This is not a world that has never heard the gospel, but one that is hearing it every day and in every way. It is literally flooded with the light. We have more Bibles than ever before, and the American Bible Society reports that they are translated into more languages than ever before—1,100 of them now. Never has there been so much evangelistic preaching and teaching, so many Christian churches and missions, so many gospel broadcasts and publications. We are living in the very light of God's Word, and in many ways it is brighter than ever before. But still we are lost, looking for the light, and not finding it. We don't know where we are going, and, in fact, many of us don't really know where to go.

Maybe there is a lesson for us in that story about the Ethiopian eunuch, the queen's treasurer, recorded in Acts 8. He may have been a different type, and he certainly lived in a different world, but he had essentially the same problem we have today. You recall that Philip, the evangelist, was sent by the Spirit to join this man while he was on his way riding along in his chariot. And this is what happened:

"And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him. The place of the Scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: In his humiliation his judgment was taken away; and who shall

declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth. And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?" (Acts 8:30-34).

What a pathetic case! Here was a searching soul, earnestly and eagerly looking for the light, but not finding it, even though he stood in the very center of it. He had eyes to see, but he was blind. He had the Bible of that day in his hand, the Old Testament, and he was reading it, and seriously studying it, but he couldn't understand it. The Word of God spoke to him, but he didn't hear what it said. It was meaningless to him—imagine that! The voice of God didn't make sense to him!

But that's not all. Do you know why this man couldn't understand his Bible? Well, he was reading one of the Old Testament prophecies about the coming Savior of mankind, the One who would sacrifice Himself on the cross for sinners, the Light for lost souls in a lost world. But he was hopelessly confused about what he read. In other words, he was standing in the very presence of Calvary's cross, and he didn't know it! He had his hand on the very heart of the whole Bible, the gospel of salvation from sin through the blood of Jesus Christ, but he didn't realize it! He was reading about the Son of God, but he didn't recognize Him! That's why the Word of God didn't make sense to him. He missed the whole point of it—the promise of redemption through the vicarious atonement of Christ on the cross. That was God's sole purpose in giving us His Word—to tell us the wonderful story of His grace, to give us the answer to that age-old question which mankind is always asking! What must I do to be saved?

It seems to me that this is precisely the problem of a lot of people today. Maybe you are one of them, lost in the light. You have a Bible, and you are probably reading it more than you ever did before, and you hear its gospel of salvation in the cross of Christ; but it just doesn't make sense to you, does it? You may even want to be religious, and so you search for answers to the questions that trouble your soul, and you read books and go to meetings and listen to lectures. But still you are in the dark. That Bible is a problem to you. And the gospel is a puzzle. You just don't know what to make of it all.

Well, there's nothing more tragic than that. But you are not the only one, judging by what we learn from our vast radio audience. And perhaps it's no wonder that there are so many people in that predicament today, for even among theologians there seems to be a lot of confusion about the Bible and its gospel of God's grace. The most popular modern interpretation speaks of the Bible as a book of myths, sacred and precious, but only symbols, not facts, just "the language of faith," not the language of God. This means that the Bible is not really God's voice to man, but rather man's voice to God, which is just another way of saying that nothing in the Bible is absolutely true any more, but all of it—including the gospel of the cross itself—is myth. It is not the Word of God, but rather the word of man, not the revelation of what is in the heart of God, but rather the revelation of what is in the heart of man.

And then it's no wonder that people get lost in the bright light of Calvary's cross. For there is nothing more unpopular today than its gospel of *vicarious atonement* through the blood of Christ. Many of our modern theologians publicly reject it, even though it is the historic Biblical inter-

pretation of the cross which is found in all the official creeds and confessions of the Christian Church. And that explains why so many people miss the whole point of the gospel. Modern man may have a Bible, and in more than 1,100 languages, and he may be willing to read it, and he may listen to sermons about the cross which it presents, and sing hymns about it too, but he will not believe that the One who was crucified on that cross is the divine Substitute for sinners, the Son of God who saves men by taking their place and paying for their sin with His blood. That cross was a stumbling block to the Jews of Paul's day, and foolishness to the Greeks. And it still is today.

Something has happened to our Bible, something serious. It has undergone a radical change in the hands of modern man. We may know more about its writers, and its history, and its language than our forefathers did, but we don't know as much about its spirit, its message, and its power. With all of our Biblical scholarship, we ought to have more of the pure light of God's Word, the light of the cross of Christ, but actually we are groping in the darkness of our sin. Isn't it strange that after all these years with the Bible we are so confused about it that we don't understand it any more, that it doesn't make sense to us, that we miss the point of it completely?

There was a humorous little story in the *Reader's Digest* that emphasizes this fact rather forcefully. It told about a ten year old boy whose mother asked him what he had learned in Sunday School that day, and he replied: "Well, our teacher told us about when God sent Moses behind the enemy lines to rescue the Israelites from the Egyptians. When they came to the Red Sea, Moses called for the engineers to build a pontoon bridge. After they had all crossed, they

looked back and saw the Egyptian tanks coming. Quick as a flash, Moses radioed headquarters on his walkie-talkie to send bombers to blow up the bridge and saved the Israelites." "Bobby," exclaimed his startled mother, "is that really the way your teacher told that story?" "Well, not exactly," said the boy, "but if I told it her way, you'd never believe it!"

Sometimes we can see a problem more clearly when we put it in a humorous context. At any rate, there is more truth to the implication of that little story than we may like to admit. The Bible has been modernized to make it more up-to-date. The gospel has been streamlined to make it more popular. And there's nothing humorous about that, even though it means that we are only double-crossing ourselves. Indeed, that is the irony of it all, the tragedy of our time, that we are lost in the very light of God's Word, standing beneath the cross of Jesus, so close to the Savior that we could almost put our finger in the nailprints in His hands and feet, and reach out and touch His wounded side.

Eliza Scudder must have had something of this tragedy in mind when she wrote her poem, *Who By Searching Can Find Out God?*

*I cannot find Thee! Still on restless pinion
My spirit beats the void where Thou dost
dwell;*

*I wander lost through all Thy vast dominion,
And shrink beneath Thy light ineffable.*

*I cannot find Thee! Even when most adoring
Before Thy shrine I bend in lowliest prayer,
Beyond these bounds of thought, my thought
upsoaring,*

*From farthest quest comes back: Thou are
not there.*

*Yet high above the limits of my seeing,
And folded far within the inmost heart,
And deep below the deeps of conscious
being,
Thy splendor shineth; there, O God, Thou
art.*

Jesus said once: "And this is the condemnation, 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 reprov'd. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God" (John 3:19-21).

So what really keeps us in the dark, even though we live in the light, is that we refuse to have our sin exposed and expelled. We will not actually forsake our evil ways. We may be willing to confess that we are sinners, but we won't give up our sin. And that explains why the whole idea of the vicarious atonement of Christ on the cross is so unpopular today. We don't really want to get rid of our sin. And yet that's what the blood of Christ is for. And that's precisely what it will do to us, if we truly put our trust in it for salvation.

Are you one of the many people in this world who are literally lost in the light? If so, isn't that your trouble too? Now be honest with yourself—at least with yourself—and see if it isn't true that your sin is really keeping you from finding your God. How can you expect to hear His voice and to understand His Word when there is such a big barrier that separates you from Him? And why should you want to find Him at all unless you really want to get rid of your sin? For that is His only purpose in revealing Himself

to us, you know. He has given us His Book to tell us about His Son, through whom we can be cleansed of our sin and thus reconciled to God. And so if you don't want His Son to expose and expel your sin, you don't really want God at all, do you?

That Ethiopian, to whom Philip was sent, may very well have been like that too. He was a man of high standing in the queen's court, the Secretary of the Treasury, and altogether worthy of that position. He deserved both the honor and the responsibility. He was a good man. Everybody said so. And so it was no doubt very hard for him to understand that passage in the prophecy of Isaiah which told about the suffering Savior who would come to deliver His people from their sins. He probably asked why that terrible sacrifice was necessary, and if it was, what it had to do with him. And as long as he felt that way about himself, the Word of God would never make sense to him. In other words, he didn't see the light until he saw his sin, and confessed it, and forsook it, and then got rid of it through faith in Jesus Christ as his Savior.

The same thing can happen to you, but only if you do the same thing he did. Do you really want to find God? Do you really want to hear His voice and understand His Word? Well, remember, He wants to find you too, and He wants to talk to you, and to reveal Himself to you, but He doesn't want you if you want your sin. In fact, the reason He wants you is to save you from your sin. He has paid a high price for sin: the blood of His only begotten Son! And that's why you'll never really know Him and understand Him unless you want to see Him as your Savior on that cross.

So make up your mind: do you want your

sin, or your God; do you want to live in the dark, or in the light; do you want to be lost, or found?

*O Jesus, joy of loving hearts,
Thou fount of life, Thou light of men,
From fullest bliss that earth imparts
We turn unfilled to Thee again.*

*Thy truth unchanged has ever stood;
Thou savest those that on Thee call;
To them that seek Thee Thou art good,
To them that find Thee, all in all.*

*Our restless spirits yearn for Thee,
Where'er our changeful lot is cast,
Glad, that Thy gracious smile we see,
Blest, that our faith can hold Thee fast.*

*O Jesus, ever with us stay,
Make all our moments calm and bright;
Chase the dark night of sin away,
Shed o'er the world Thy holy light.*

Listen to the Back-to-God Hour broadcast every Sunday from the following stations:

2KY	Sydney	8.30	p.m.
2BH	Broken Hill	2.00	p.m.
3XY	Melbourne	7.15	p.m.
3YB	Warrnambool	3.00	p.m.
3UL	Warragul	3.00	p.m.
4KQ	Brisbane	5.30	p.m.
6PR	Perth	9.30	p.m.
6TZ	Bunbury	9.30	p.m.
7EX	Launceston	9.30	p.m.
7AD	Devonport	12.45	p.m.
7HO	Hobart (Friday)	9.00	p.m.
HCJB (Quito, Ecuador)		5.30	p.m.
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NEW ZEALAND LOG—

HCJB (Quito, Ecuador) 7.30 p.m.

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