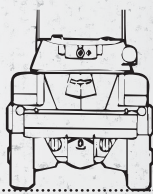


THE TREASURES OF DARKNESS



WARM UP

About 700 B.C. the prophet Isaiah penned these inspired words: *"I will give you the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that you may know that I, the LORD, who calls you by your name, am the God of Israel."* Isaiah 45:3 These are puzzling words – "The treasures of darkness" seems to be a contradictory phrase. Why? Because we have come to associate God with light and brilliance, not darkness! Is it possible that treasures can be found in darkness? Exodus 20:21 says, "... Moses drew near the thick darkness where God was". This is no contradiction. Many of us have heard God's voice most clearly in our darkest hours. Often it's not in our prosperity, but in the dark night of trouble that God speaks most clearly and tenderly to us.



BACKGROUND

Christians are meant to live their lives on 'Happy Street'! Or so many would have us believe. But there are times when we are not on the mountaintops, bouncing with joy, but in the valleys, in a quiet place, waiting on God. Remember, joy comes on the mountains, but growth comes in the valley. As the topsoil and the nutrients wash down the mountainside and settle in the valley, that's where the fruit begins to grow. If we have the vision to see, we will realise that there are 'treasures of darkness', and often it is in 'the thick darkness' where God is. God often speaks to us through our valley experiences.

READ Hebrews 12:5-11; 1 Peter 4:12,13



QUESTIONS

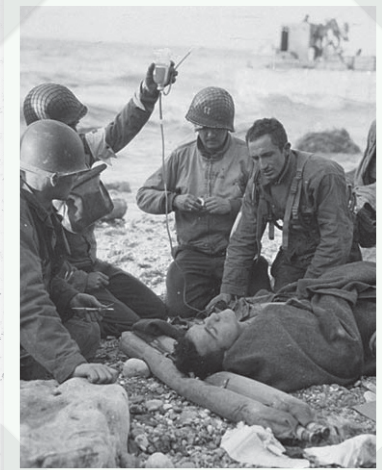
1. What are some of your valley experiences and dark places where you have found God?
2. Read Hebrews 12:11 again. Note that it talks about the chastening and discipline of the Lord. What is the fruit of this chastening, (see verse 11), and what do you think the words to be 'exercised' or 'trained' by it mean?

3. Paul the apostle said he had his share of persecution and valley experiences. What do you think he meant in 2 Corinthians 12:9,10 when he talked about his response to these hard times?

4. What 'treasures of darkness and hidden riches in secret places' have you discovered (or someone else for that matter) through trials and tribulations?

CONSIDER THIS

The pit and the prison were the university of experience that prepared Joseph for the palace. Moses' lonely years in the desert under Jethro prepared him to be the great leader of Israel. A Chinese proverb reads: "A gem is not polished without rubbing, nor a man made perfect without trials".



IT'S TIME FOR PRAYER

Ask the Lord not to spare you from trials, but to teach you through them.

MY RESPONSE AS A PROMISE KEEPER

I will put on the whole armour of God, so that I will not wilt under the strain of hard times, but emerge triumphant from the valleys!



WRAP UP

As a group pray for one another, but especially for those going through the valley of the shadow of death. And remember, where there is a shadow, there is always a light! Finally: God is more interested in our holiness than He is in our happiness.