

## Dark Night of the Soul

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*Photo date and location unknown*

The alarm rang. In pain, I pushed the button. The exhaustion that was always there was not the cause of the pain, nor were the nightmares that seemed to be with me of late. The pain was in the waking itself. The nightmares of unconsciousness were comfort compared to the nightmare that was consciousness. I longed to find that waking was a dream and fall back into sleep's oblivion.

I forced myself not to think. I forced my feet on to the floor and my mind into the many activities of the coming day. I forced myself into grateful prayer to Heavenly Father. I forced myself to grasp how much He wanted seen done in this day in this city that He had put into my hands in spite of myself.

If I must think of pain, I turned my mind to His pain, to the One who has suffered so long for His love and who cannot even escape into the peace of sleep... Oh, God, how much more suffering have I brought to You. You who have given so much to me... No, I must not think these thoughts. If I do, I will surely die. I will be lost.

Quickly I dressed and rushed out to make breakfast for the members. Everything was done quickly, because I survived by filling my life to the brim. I had never before been so busy nor accomplished so much. It seemed as if I was living many lives in one. But this was out of a desperation to hold onto the thread of life that connected me to the church. Later, it would be out of a sense of God's urgency and longing.

Not long before, due to circumstances that I had been surrounded by and allowed myself to fall into, I had descended into the pits of hell. When I realized where I was, I went out into the night to be alone. Weeping profusely, I slid down an embankment off the road and sat in a flow of mud in the most utter depths of despair.

I debated with myself about leaving the church, but I knew that I could not. Even if I did, I would still one day have to come into heaven through our Parents, even if it be a thousand years hence. No, to stay in the church was the shortest road to where I was inevitably going-even though the church which I loved so deeply had now become my port to hell.

I thought of suicide. But I knew too much about spirit world. I knew too well that suicide was no way out of hell but only the way further in. And again I returned to the same point: the most direct route to heaven

was through our Parents. No, I must plunge forward. Even if Father never looked at me again, even if all my brothers and sisters turned their faces from me, I must go forward in their midst.

Slowly my mind turned in gratitude to Satan. Satan had slung me into this blackest hole, but he could not have done it without a base. Somewhere in me and in my lineage was his handle. I had to be grateful to Satan because he did not allow it to remain buried. My momentary shame and despair were but a small price to pay for being able to see the darkness that had been lurking undetected in my soul. Now it was out; now I was looking at it. God, I would hate to have been blessed without realizing that this was there. I would hate to have unsuspectingly passed this on to my children.

I must catch a hold of this darkness and determine to become free from it so it can never catch me again. I must overcome it and grow beyond it. It was probably not only something in my own life but also in my lineage. My intense desire became to heal my lineage forever in the process of healing myself, not just to cover up but to understand, to overcome and to be liberated.

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This happened during my fourth year in the church. Sometime later, in the midst of a talk Father was giving after one of the campaigns, he said something that immediately caught my attention: The first three years in the church we are paying indemnity for our own personal lives, but in the fourth through the seventh years we are paying indemnity for our lineage. This gave much meaning to me for the intense struggle, darkness and loneliness of those years in my church life.

It took me a long time to recover from this experience, like a slow resurrection from death itself. It seemed as if the merit of my first three years in the church was gone. However, I came to believe that, as long as we keep moving in all sincerity, we won't slip backwards. First of all, Heavenly Father never forgets even the smallest offering we make to Him in our lives. Secondly, as we move forward, there may be pits that we cannot see until we actually fall into them (from ancestry or because of future mission or whatever). But, if we keep moving, we can pick ourselves up and make our way up the other side and finally out into the open again. And we will find that we are further along than we were the moment we fell down. When we are down, it seems as if we have lost all, but it's so important to keep moving in spite of wounds.

When I was down, outside of my prayers, I was comforted in two ways: one was in seeing my spiritual children. The a voice within me whispered, "even if I am but trash now, still my life had worth. Look at these beautiful children who bring such joy to Heavenly Father!" The other comfort was my close friends. They greeted me with warmth, as if nothing had happened, embraced me and supported me with no judgment.

In my sixth year and again in my ninth year, I circled around and hit the same weakness in my life. And each time it seemed that the test sank more deeply into the recesses of my heart. Each time the repetition was uncanny. Though the individuals around me were different, the same attitudes and even words came out of them as I had seen and heard in those I was associated with in my fourth year. It was amazing, as if they were reading from the same script, or the same spirits were speaking through them. But each time I was more aware of what was happening. The red light would go on and I would stand back from myself and take control, feeling more and more cleansed and confident that God was there.

After the third test, a new sense of joy, peace and self-worth slowly began to blossom in my life. How grateful I am to God-for the darkness and for the light.