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SOMEWHERE THE SUN IS ALWAYS SHINING!

During the 1970s it was referred to as "The Western Whitehouse"—it was the residence of President Nixon, a lovely property situated above the cliffs overlooking the Pacific Ocean at San Clemente, California. Day after day there had been no sunshine there. Clouds shrouded the coast. But there was sunshine here in the desert where a day without sunshine is rare.

Walter Annenberg invited President Nixon to come over and stay at his "Sunnylands" estate, an exquisite 200-acre landscaped property, complete with lakes and golf course. (Other presidents who have been guests at "Sunnylands" include Eisenhower, Ford, Reagan, Clinton, George H.W. Bush, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama.)

Driving over to the desert, President Nixon and his entourage stopped at McDonalds in Banning, California. Secret Service men went in to place the order; Nixon remained in the presidential vehicle. An article in the Palm Springs newspaper, "The Desert Sun," read: "PRESIDENT STOPS FOR BIG MACS IN BANNING." According to the article, it had been years since Nixon had eaten a hamburger.

We all know it can be dark and cloudy in places; but somewhere the sun is *always* shining! So is it spiritually. God is just as real as he ever was. He is just as real—whether *we* feel like it or not. Thankfully, his power has not been exhausted on some former generation.

He is still the great *I AM* (Exod. 3:14). With him "there is *no variation* or shadow of turning" (James 1:17). "Jesus Christ the *same* yesterday, and today, and forever" (Heb. 1:12,13:8). In Malachi we read: "I am the Lord, *I do not change*" (Mal. 3:6). And a few verses later, he is called "the SUN of righteousness...with healing in his wings" (4:2).

When the Old Testament prophets sought to portray times of chaos and turmoil, they used terms like "a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness" (Zeph. 1:15; Joel 2:2). Victorious times, on the other hand, were "like the light of the morning when the SUN rises, a morning *without clouds*" (2 Sam. 23:4). An old hymn, written back in 1885—"Unclouded Day"—used the same analogy:

Oh, they tell me of a home far beyond the skies,
Oh, they tell me of a home far away;
Oh, they tell me of a home where no storm clouds rise,
Oh, they tell me of an unclouded day.

Oh, the land of cloudless day,
Oh, the land of an unclouded sky.
Oh, they tell me of a home where no storm clouds rise,
Oh, they tell me of an unclouded day.

This was the song Johnny Cash sang at age 12—his first time to sing publically—at a small church in Dyess, Arkansas. Years later, in 1970, on his network television program he sang it again, with the same woman who accompanied him before, playing the piano: his mother. A clip from that program can be seen on youtube.

The contrast between *sunshine* and cloudy, gloomy days, has often been used by song writers, whether folk, country, pop, or gospel:

"You are my sunshine...you make me happy when skies are gray."
"Together again, the gray skies are gone."
"Sunshine on my shoulders."
"Walking in the sunshine, sing a little sunshine song."
"We'll sing in the sunshine, we'll laugh every day."
"Keep on the sunny side, always on the sunny side."

In this article I will mention various hymns that speak of God's *sunshine*, all of which I have known since childhood. Back in the early 1950s, we listened to "The Old Fashioned Revival Hour" on radio with Charles E. Fuller. Here are the words of what was a theme song for that program:

Heavenly SUNSHINE, heavenly SUNSHINE,
flooding my soul with glory divine,
heavenly SUNSHINE heavenly SUNSHINE,
Hallelujah, Jesus is mine!

Things may look dark now, the trials may be severe, but they will not last forever. As a Stuart Hamblen song phrases it, "*These things shall pass...A rose looks gray at midnight, but the flame is just asleep....The darkest night is just one hour before dawn.*"

At one time or another, because of sickness or a troubled mind, many of us have endured a rough night. But often the coming of dawn, the sunlight of another day, has brought relief. "Weeping may endure for a night, *but joy comes in the morning*" (Psalms 30:5). An old hymn expressed it this way:

Oh, the darkness of the night has passed away
It is morning in my heart
I am living in the SUNLIGHT of the day,
It is morning in my heart.

We know that somewhere the sun is always shining, though in present circumstances we may not see or understand. But as an old saying phrases it: "Every cloud has a silver lining." There is a purpose being worked out in our lives, whether *we* always

understand it or not (Psa. 37:23; Isa. 55:9). "The path of the just is like the shining SUN, that shines ever brighter unto the perfect day" (Proverbs 4:18). Farther along we'll understand why.

Around the year 1949, the Humbard Family held evangelistic meetings in Riverside at the Municipal Auditorium, attended by large crowds of people from many churches. I was 10 years old. Rex Humbard's father was the preacher in those days. Rex and other family members all played musical instruments and sang, one favorite being "Father Along." It had been around since 1911, but for many of us this was the first time to hear it.

Farther along we'll know all about it,
Farther along we'll understand why;
Cheer up, my brother, live in the SUNSHINE,
We'll understand it all by and by.

"*Be of good cheer,*" were the words of Paul aboard a ship of 276 discouraged people who had lost hope. The waters were turbulent, and the sun had not been seen for two weeks. But Paul had received a word from the Lord that not a one would be lost, though the ship itself would perish (Acts 27:20-37).

Jesus said, "In the world you shall have tribulation: but *be of good cheer*; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). And so it was with the early followers of Jesus, though experiencing trials and tribulation, they rejoiced "with joy inexpressible and full of glory" (1 Peter 1:8).

Though we commonly think of Gideon as a man of *faith* (Heb. 11:32), he was not always such. He had his times of fear and frustration. Then he had an encounter with an angel, who from all outward appearances looked like an ordinary man. No wings extended from his body nor was there any divine glow about him. (It was only later when the angel suddenly disappeared right before his eyes, that Gideon knew he had entertained a divine visitor.) With a staff in his hand, the "man" causally sat down under a large tree, close to where Gideon was fearfully threshing wheat. He called over to him:

"The LORD is with you, you mighty man of valor!" No doubt Gideon thought: "*Who me? You must have the wrong guy!*" Gideon was from a minority tribe, was the least in all his father's house, and his father was a worshipper of Baal.

Gideon questioned: "If the LORD is with us...where are all his *miracles* which our fathers told us about?" (Judges 6:11-13). It was a valid question. God *is* a God of miracles. One wonders if Gideon had concluded, as some today, that "the days of miracles are past." What Gideon did not realize was that he was right in the middle of a miracle! Though things looked dark, victory—*miraculous* victory—was just ahead. With the odds stacked against him, Gideon was used of God to defeat the enemies of his nation. He had been a nothing and a nobody, but *he went from "zero" to "hero"!*

Have dark times in your life caused you to be discouraged? You are not in bad company:

At one point in his life, Job was so discouraged he wished *he had never been born!* (Job 3:11). Jeremiah had the *same* experience (Jer. 20:14-18). Elijah, fearful of Jezebel, prayed to *die* (1 Kings 19:4). John the Baptist, when locked up in prison, sent messengers to Jesus asking, "Are you the Coming One, *or do we look for another?*" (Luke 7:20). Even some of Jesus closest followers, including the apostles, had times of doubt and discouragement (Mark 14:50; Luke 24:10,11, 25; Matt. 28:17).

When we face dark times in our lives, we need to remember that somewhere the sun is *always* shining. Though an airport may be covered with dismal gray clouds, fog and rain, in moments after takeoff, passengers may come up through the clouds into the blue skies and sunshine!

California's San Joaquin Valley can be socked in by low clouds and fog—sometimes for days. Back in the 1970s, while living in Visalia for a period of time, a fine Christian lady we knew, told us it was getting to her. She longed for sunshine! She opened the Bible for comfort, put her finger on a verse, but even this spoke of the sun being darkened!

To the east is the lovely, much higher elevation of Sequoia National Park. The highest peak in the lower 48 states, Mt. Whitney (elevation 14,505 feet), is located within the park. So we decided to take a drive in that direction. By the time we had passed the 4,000 foot elevation, we came up out of the clouds—suddenly—into bright sunshine! Looking back across the valley, the clouds had the appearance of a vast ocean. What a difference the sunshine makes!

How does this apply spiritually? If we would rise up above the cloudy darkness and gloom of this world, we need to go *higher!*—UP, up to the higher ground of God's sunshine. "Seek those things which are *above*...not things on the earth" (Col. 3:1,2). Some old hymns have expressed it like this:

I'm pressing on the upward way,
new heights I'm gaining every day;
still praying as I onward bound,
Lord, plant my feet on *higher ground*. (1898)

From sinking sand He lifted me,
with tender hand, He lifted me;
from shades of night to planes of *light*,
Oh praise His name, He lifted me! (1905)

There is SUNSHINE in my soul today;
more glorious and bright than glows in any earthly sky,
for *Jesus is my light*. (1887)

In the literal sense, the light of the world is the *sun* (Genesis 1:14-18). Spiritually, the light of the world is *Jesus*, who said: "I am the light of the world, He who follows me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life" (John 8:12). In another place he said, "*As long as I am in the world*, I am the light of the world" (John 9:5). But when he was no longer in this world, in a definite sense, those of us who are his followers became the light of the world: "*You are the light of the world*" (Matt. 5:14; Phil. 2:15). Or, to put it another way: "The only Bible some folks read is your life and mine."

SUNLIGHT, SUNLIGHT in my soul today,
SUNLIGHT, SUNLIGHT all along the way;
since the Savior found me, took away my sin,
I have had the SUNLIGHT of his love within. (1897)

"The LORD God is a SUN....no good thing will he withhold from those who walk uprightly" (Psalms 84:11). Though clouds may obscure the sky, *somewhere the SUN is always shining!*

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