

The Promise of Sunrise

✦ Deliverance from darkness (v.1)

✦ Joy in His light (v.2)

In the name of Christ our Champion Redeemer, dear family of God waiting for Him:

The prayer “FOR THOSE SERVING IN THE ARMED FORCES” in the back of *Meditations* states, “Lord, for more than a decade our country has been at war, fighting in distant lands. Let us never forget how dearly the military families have paid in suffering, loss, and death. Lord of hosts, keep safe those who serve in our country’s armed forces. Be with their families during long deployments. Heal the injured and comfort the grieving. Move us to show our thanks to all who fight for our freedom.”¹

As the years go by, more combat veterans and their families must deal with PTSD, *Post Traumatic Stress Disorder*. This was theory to me until that overnight in the MSP Airport. Startled by a man who seemed to be leaning over me and threatening my wife and others, I snapped. Before I knew what I was doing, I’d slammed him into the wall. A flight attendant sleeping nearby calmly said to him, “I told you to tell him you were trying to get your stuff.” This tiny sliver of PTSD hit me after only a few weeks in the Middle East seeing machine guns and armed guards. What can possibly help real veterans who put their lives on the line, who lost friends and comrades fighting? This heals: **The Promise of Sunrise**.

✦ Deliverance from darkness (v.1)

Athletes, soldiers, nations, Christians all have one thing in common: When things go too easy, we get cocky and proud. We feel happy for a while when the happenings of our life go our way. But anxiety and dread can set in just from the fear of losing the good times. Then there’s the physical, emotional, spiritual laziness that makes us vulnerable to attack – from enemy combatants or enemies of your soul. What Isaiah said in 700 B.C. is still true today: **“See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the Lord rises upon you and his glory appears over you.”** (Isaiah 60:2 NIV84)

There is no greater **darkness** than that which permeates our souls. Today’s *Living Saints* insert says it so well describing us all in our infancy: **“Dead. Spiritually dead. When it came to God or to faith or to obedience, we were more helpless than a newborn baby. We could do nothing We didn’t love God. We didn’t want to love God. We couldn’t believe in God. We didn’t want to believe in God. We couldn’t obey his commands. We didn’t want to obey his commands. We weren’t able to make any kind of decision for Christ, accept anyone as Lord, open our hearts up to Jesus, or invite the Spirit in. We were dead, spiritually dead. We were unable to do a thing. We were unable to save ourselves.”**²

Today’s Word of God from the last book of the Old Testament mixes fear with joy, lest we become coldhearted and lazy in this good fight of faith. While so many dread climate change and global warming, God predicts global burning. Hollywood portrays this in movies like *Armageddon* where heroes of earth unite to save the planet. In our *Revelation Rewind* study we saw all the nations gang up against God: **“They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God’s people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them.”** (Revelation 20:9 NIV84) This we see in our society today, angry unbelief aimed at God and His people. Yet the LORD talked about this 3,000 years ago: **“Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth**

¹ *Meditations – Daily Devotional*, Aug. 30, 2015 – Nov. 28, 2015, p. 97. NPH Subscriptions: 1-800-662-6093.

² *Living Saints – ALIVE!* NPH (Northwestern Publishing House) Milwaukee, WI – www.nph.net. Item: 1400159-A.

take their stand and the rulers gather together against the LORD and against his Anointed One. "Let us break their chains," they say, "and throw off their fetters." The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the LORD scoffs at them. Then he rebukes them in his anger and terrifies them in his wrath, saying, "I have installed my King on Zion, my holy hill." (Psalm 2:1–6 NIV84)

God will have the last laugh, and His enemies won't be laughing. They preferred death and **darkness** while they claimed control over their own lives and freedom *from* God and freedom *from* religion? God will finally give them what they want. Don't worry, people of God. Our vindication is nearer now than when God first said this through Malachi: *"Surely the day is coming; it will burn like a furnace. All the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble, and that day that is coming will set them on fire," says the LORD Almighty. "Not a root or a branch will be left to them."* In spite of all their pomp and power: *"Their tombs will remain their houses forever, their dwellings for endless generations, though they had named lands after themselves."* (Psalm 49:11 NIV84)

There's a great example of a soldier who was given **Deliverance from darkness** by the Word of God. When Jesus promised to heal his dear servant, the Roman centurion answered: *"Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."* Jesus was astonished: *"Amen I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith. I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."* (Matthew 8:8-12)

Deliverance from darkness by God's **Promise of Sunrise** mixes joy with fear, fear with hope.

✠ Joy in His light (v.2)

"Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling." (Psalm 2:11 NIV84) We're soldiers of the cross with Christ who've already won the war, but must mop up pockets of resistance. Christ our Champion beat sin, death and hell by His death and resurrection. But Satan is still dangerous, armed with weapons of temptation, laziness, false teaching to obscure the light of Christ. Our victorious Commander keeps calling us to rise now before dawn in **The Promise of Sunrise** soon to break: *"But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings."* (Malachi 4:2 NIV84)

In this last chapter of the Old Testament we see fear mixed with hope in the "coming" day, a day of wild extremes. The wicked are like chaff, blown away in flames. With the fire past, nothing remains but ashes; their place knows them no more. 'Not a root or a branch will be left to them.' In contrast the **darkness** is destroyed as the Sun of righteousness rises above the horizon. We believers have been watching this long glow in the sky. We know the sun, God's Son, is coming. In **darkness** such great **light**. Now it peaks above the horizon, leaping into the sky in all its splendor. It brings healing to our cold, stiff joints, warmth to our hearts—in its glow. It heals and restores. It brings life eternal life!³

I wish I could tell you more of what heaven is like. But Christ already came from heaven to do just that, and we're not there yet. We still have battles to fight and win with the weapons of the Spirit in Word and sacrament. There are babies and adults who still need the Word-powered water that brings **Joy in His light**. Many still must learn to examine themselves in this **light** to see their worthiness in Christ alone. Then they can join us at the Lord's Table to receive **Joy in His light** with the bread and wine where He rises with healing truly present in His body and blood. The dawn is breaking. The Day is almost here. Combat veterans and so many others are suffering. Who is on your prayer list to bring them **Joy in His light**? Here's a new PTSD: *Post Traumatic Savior-Delight*. Rise and shine for Jesus! Amen.

³ Adapted from Hartzell, E. S. (1991). *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi* (p. 150). Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Pub. House.
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