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APRIL - JUNE 2009 NEWSLETTER



### DIVINE DARKNESS

While in Montenegro this year, my pastor-coordinator Vladimir Cizmanski gave me a book by a man that played a great role in my Christian walk as I know he did with thousands of others. His name is Ronald Dunn. The book is titled "When Heaven Is Silent." It is the account of Ron's battle with depression and the tragic suicide of his 19 year old son Ronnie Jr. It is an honest look at a father and mother (Kaye) who suffered long and painfully hard during this great adversity. For those who are not acquainted with the ministry of Ron Dunn, who has since gone on to be with the Lord, he was a pastor, teacher, author and conference speaker. He was one of the greatest Bible teachers that I was ever privileged to sit under. One of his favorite expressions was, "I may be Dunn but I'm not finished." Much of what I teach today I learned at the feet of this great man of God. Like many of God's great saints, he experienced what some have called "The Sahara of the heart and the dark night of the soul." But in spite of this terribly painful ordeal, Ron continued to declare God's Word and died praising Jesus.

Some of you may be thinking that this could not be so in one who is walking with God and living in His will. Can a true follower of Christ experience such darkness, despair and depression? Well, let's ask the Prophet Isaiah. He writes, "Who among you fears the Lord and obeys His Word? Let him who walks in the dark and has no light, trust in the Name of the Lord" (50:10). He is saying that one of the identifying marks of a saint of God is how they react to the dark night of the soul; when the light is taken away and the Sahara of the heart comes pouring in. The Hebrew text suggests that this is a place where the one who fears God walks in darkness so deep that there is no glimmer of light to guide them through this awesome darkness. We all like to walk where there is plenty of light so you can see where you are going and arrive safely at your final destination. You can see the obstacles and hazards and avoid them. You can easily recognize those who are friends and foes. Light lets us walk in confidence and assurance. But walking in darkness creates the possibility of danger and harm. In the darkness, aloneness and abandonment often become our enemy. It may seem as though God is hiding and chooses not to show Himself. The "whys" are awakened in the soul, and the usual things like prayer, worship, and reading of the Word have little impact on this darkness. Listen to the Prophet Jeremiah: "He has set me in dark places. He has hedged me in so that I cannot get out. Even when I cry and shout He shuts out my prayer" (Lam. 3:6-8). Ron said that he became numb to spiritual things. The books, seminars and formulas were just empty words. He had come to the place where he couldn't praise or pray his way out of this darkness. He rebuked the devil and tried to plead the blood of Jesus but nothing removed the darkness.

I know it sounds impossible and hard to believe that a saint of God could come to such a place in his or her life, but I have read of numerous great men and women of God who have traveled this road before. I myself have visited the place. It is a major theme that runs throughout the Book of Psalms. Listen to the heart cry of this saint: "How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me" (13:1). We hear the same pain in Psalm 42. "My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with Him? My tears have been my food day and night. Why have You forgotten?" (1-9). Psalm 22, 25, 39, 86, 88, 109 and many more say the same thing. There are nearly as many psalms that speak of this dark night of the soul as there are of praise and thanksgiving. I think that we might be afraid to teach on these psalms thinking that it might put God who is good all the time in a bad light. We find it too difficult to believe that our good God would allow this sort of thing to go on in the life of one of His precious children. But let me remind you that God owes none of us an explanation for His actions. Look at Job the servant of God. In all of his suffering God never told him of the deal that He and Satan had come to in chapters 1 and 2. Job had never heard the question, "Will a man serve God for nothing?" But he went on to prove that there were those who were so loyal to God that they would serve Him not for what they could get from Him but simply because He alone is God and is worthy of all our worship, praise, honor, love and loyalty.

Yes, the darkness of the soul is real and as some have said it has often been their closest friend. Many of these saints carry great guilt and shame thinking that if they were right with God, if they were more spiritual this would not be happening to them. Some would be willing to exchange this darkness for a more tangible thing like cancer so they could get help in their time of trouble. But it is not meant to be. Martin Marty wrote after the death of his wife about the absence in the heart. He spoke of the waste place that was there because God was silent and distantly removed from him. I think Moses might have felt this silence of God after he fled from Egypt and ended up

on the back side of the desert caring for his father-in-law's sheep for 40 years. David too might have felt God's silence while trying to stay one step ahead of jealous King Saul who wanted him dead for no fault of his own. Job surely must have felt this silence while suffering as few men have ever suffered because Satan wanted him to curse God with his lips. And I think our dear Savior felt that silence as He hung on the cross bearing the weight of the sins of the world. Listen to His cry: "My God, My God why have you forsaken Me?"

While going through his absence in the heart Ron Dunn said that he learned a very liberating truth. He found out that it was okay to tell God how he felt since He already knew. We have never told God anything that He didn't already know. He is never surprised at anything we say. Ron said he never heard God say in response to something he said, "I would have never thought that would come from you." Israel had to deal with God's presence and His absence. His presence could be seen and experienced at one minute and then only His absence be felt. The prophet Isaiah wrote, "Truly You are a God who hides Himself; O God and Savior of Israel" (Isaiah 45:15). This reality was not deleted from Old Testament Scripture. The Psalms of Lament were not deleted. Psalms like 88 deal with this very thought. Depressing as it might seem, it speaks of this painful absence. There is no cover up or denial. There may appear to be a lacking of faith and victory different from the encouragement found in other psalms. I think these psalms are a great addition to our faith because no matter how bad things got there is never the hint of failing to trust God. Job in his darkest hour declared, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him" (Job 13:15). In chapter 17 he said that men spit in his face and his eyes had grown dim because of his sorrow. But those who are the righteous of God hold to the truth of His Word and grow stronger and stronger in their darkness. In chapter 19 Job tells us that God had put darkness in his path and had stripped him of his glory. He goes on to say in chapter 23 that God knows the way that he takes and is testing him so that he might come forth as gold. His faith is rock solid as he says that his foot held fast to God's steps and had not turned from God's way. He has stayed true to God's Words and has treasured them more than necessary food (vs. 10-12). Then He concludes with a powerful statement of faith in verses 13-14. He says that whatever God desires He does and He performs what is appointed to him (Job). He reaffirms his faith in chapter 27 by saying no matter what happens he will hold fast to his integrity even until he dies and will never let go of the righteousness of his God.

In our times of darkness every thought must be directed toward God Himself. Though darkness may surround us and engulf us we must not allow it rob us of our trust and hope in God. We have His Word that He will not forsake us. He would have to do something that He is not capable of doing and that is to lie to one of His blood bought children if He ever forsook us. As we said earlier, God forms the light and creates darkness (Isaiah 45:6). God asks who fears Him and who obeys His voice. He then asks who walks in darkness and has had no light. Let that person trust in the Name of the Lord and rely on Him (Isaiah 50:10).

Let me close with the words of David as he tells us that God's hand leads us and holds us when the darkness falls on us. But the night will be light around us because the darkness cannot hide from God. The night shall shine as the day because the darkness and the light are alike to our great God (Psalm 139:10-12). What a glorious mystery! As painful as the dark night of the soul may be there are great treasures to be found there. The Lord will give treasures of darkness and hidden riches in a secret place. Why? That we may know that He is the Lord that calls us by name (Isaiah 45:3). And in the following verses He is quick to tell us that He is the Lord and there is no God besides Him. That we may know from the rising of the sun to its setting (day or night) there is no God besides Him. He is the Lord and there in none other (vs.5-6). Blessed are those who walk in God's Divine Darkness for they shall bring forth the light of the Living Christ.

## WHERE I'VE BEEN AND WHERE I'M GOING

### 2009

<b>March 6-31</b>	Serbia and Montenegro (Yugoslavia)
<b>April 8</b>	American Rail Car Bible Class in Longview, Texas
<b>April 25</b>	Celebrating My Oldest Granddaughter's 13th Birthday
<b>April 26-29</b>	Schwab City Baptist Church in Livingston, Texas
<b>May 3</b>	New Covenant Church in Port Arthur, Texas
<b>May 6</b>	Macedonia Bible Conference in Fouke, Arkansas
<b>May 15-16</b>	Copperfield Baptist Men's Retreat at Trinity Pines in Trinity, Texas
<b>May 20</b>	American Rail Car Bible Class in Longview, Texas
<b>May 24</b>	Bethesda Presbyterian Church in Lindale, Texas
<b>May 31-June 3</b>	Valley View Baptist Church in Longview, Texas
<b>June 10 &amp; 24</b>	American Rail Car Bible Class in Longview, Texas
<b>July 12</b>	New Life Baptist Church in Longview, Texas
<b>July 21</b>	Leave For My 10th Eastern Europe Mission Project-Poland

**August 11** Return From Poland  
**August 23-28** Pisgah Baptist Church in Fouke, Arkansas  
**Sept. 13-16** First Baptist Church in Jal, New Mexico  
**October 2** Leave For My 11th Eastern Europe Mission Project–Slovakia, Czech Republic, Hungary and Possibly Romania  
**November 2** Return From Eastern Europe  
**Nov. 20-22** Clever Creek Baptist Church in Center, Texas

**TO THOSE WHO HELP ME GO**

What a blessed year it has been so far. Our faithful God has stayed true to His Word and brought forth much fruit both here in the States and in our 9th Eastern Europe Mission Project to Serbia and Montenegro. It was my fifth trip to Serbia and my first trip to Montenegro. My translators and I took the Gospel into 16 cities and preached and sang 37 times in 19 different places. We held meetings in churches, cultural halls, hotel conference halls, universities and home groups. We spoke to over 1,600 people many of whom had never heard the Gospel or been inside a church. The 14,000 miles traveled was worth every precious soul saved and seeing the Body of Christ strengthened and encouraged. To God be the glory! The meetings here in the States have been wonderfully blessed of God as well. There is still power in the preached Word and in the precious Blood of the Lamb. Lives are continually being changed by the message of our Savior’s love, mercy, grace and forgiveness.

As I look at what God has done since I returned to a traveling ministry in 2004 and started our work in Eastern Europe and the States, I am humbled time and time again at how He has put this team together. My worldwide prayer team, financial supporters, over 20 translators and five pastor coordinators make up this team. How foolish I would be to think that this ministry could exist without all of these godly team members. No preacher has ever been greater blessed and supported than the way you have supported me. Your vital role in this ministry allows me to fulfill our Lord’s Great Commission in taking the message of hope to the utter most parts of the earth. We can’t reach them all, but we can reach some and praise God for every life being transformed by the Spirit and the Word.

The Work on The Berea Center in Slovakia continues, and even though it is not complete God is using it to bring many to Jesus. We will be graduating 30 students from our Bible School this summer. We expect to enroll at least 100 students when the Center is complete. It will consist of the Bible School, Conference Center and Encampment. National and regional conferences are being held at The Center even though it is not yet complete. Many are hearing God’s Word and being saved in this blessed facility. Please pray that we can have The Center completed by the end of 2010. It will be a magnificent tribute to the hours and dollars sacrificially given by many saints who love God and desire to see souls come to His Kingdom. Countless numbers will hear and be saved as a result of The Berea Center. Please pray as God brings in the funds that disciples of Jesus will be taught, believers strengthened and those in darkness will come to His marvelous light. To Him be glory and praise!

Please be much in prayer for my second trip to Poland (July 21-August 11) and the extensive trip to Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Hungary and possibly Romania (October 2-November 2). It will be very demanding but I believe very fruitful. Each of you are so special to me and this work God has called us to do. Please know that your prayers are felt daily as I stand and declare the unsearchable riches of the Word of God. I rely daily on the Word: “They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings as eagles. They shall run and not grow weary. They shall walk and not faint” (Isaiah 40:31). This promise fills my heart with great strength, joy and peace. I declare with the Apostle Paul: “His grace is sufficient, His strength is made perfect in weakness. When I am weak then I am strong” (2Corin. 12:8-10). How great is our God!

Because He lives -We live.  
 Because He gave -We give.  
 Because He came -We go.

Your Friend–His Servant,

*Allen Buchanan*

Bro. Allen–Col. 1:28

**CD OF THE QUARTER**

“The Mind of Christ” (Philippians 2:7-8)

The \$8.00 paid for this CD will help take the gospel to one more place!

