

Lost on Mount Wilson

by Walter L. Wilson, M.D.

Every situation in life has the attention and care of the Holy Spirit. Christians in general believe that the Holy Spirit is active in the matter of dealing with souls for their salvation, and in dealing with Bible students for their illumination. It is not so generally known, however, that the Spirit is active also in directing the steps of the children of God, and in overruling circumstances for their blessing.

On one occasion, accompanied by my friend, George, we visited the observatory on top of Mt. Wilson. We were desirous of learning some of the mysteries of astronomy, and if possible, have the privilege of gazing through some of the large telescopes at the wonders of the heavens. We derived much enjoyment from our journey, and felt that we had received a great deal of benefit from the visit to the observatory. The night was spent on the crest of a mountain, from which lofty eminence we expected to observe the rising of the sun in the early morning hours. This we did. Beneath us lay a sea of billowy clouds which obscured the valley below. The sun appeared over the great mountain peaks to the east like a huge red ball of fire. It was a marvelous sight and well worth the long climb up the steep slopes.

Having eaten our breakfast, prepared and packed for us by our hostess the night before, we decided that it would be most interesting to investigate the back side of the great mountain, and see what we could find on the way down to the bottom of the ravine, some five or six miles away. We soon discovered a trail which was plainly marked by a rough sign-board, bearing the name, "Rattle Snake Trail." It seemed quite a well traversed track when we first left the summit of the mountain, but it soon led to a very steep and tortuous passage through the brush, and we had difficulty finding the trail as we slowly descended. After travelling for about an hour, picking our way slowly through treacherous and difficult places, we found to our dismay that we had lost the trail completely.

George had brought with him for use on our journey a water bottle filled with water, and out of our breakfast we had saved a

little food. The day was unusually hot and the sun beat down upon our heads mercilessly. The mountain side was so very steep that our feet were continually sliding down into the toes of our shoes, causing blisters which became quite raw and very sore. We wandered here and there, seeking vainly to find the path again. Our efforts proved futile, for it could not be found. There were no marks of any kind to direct us on our journey, nor were there any houses to be seen, nor any sign of human life.

As we wandered here and there seeking a way out of our predicament, we finally found ourselves on a ledge about fifty feet wide and covered with a thick growth of very tough bushes, through which it was very difficult to make our way. Suddenly, we discovered that immediately in front of us was a deep chasm, with a sheer drop to a gulch about 200 feet below. We retraced our steps and found that at the rear of this ledge was a steep cliff ascending several hundred feet above us. How we arrived in such a difficult situation we could not comprehend. Certain it was that we were there and in a predicament, from which we knew no way of escape.

In our perplexity, George and I knelt together in a small clearing and told our Lord that we were lost. We pleaded our helplessness and His supremacy. We were wholly cast upon Him for deliverance and so we committed our cause to the One whom we had learned to know and love. We knew that the Holy Spirit was ever present to guide the feet of the children of God, to direct their ways, and to keep them for Himself. We were happy to thus trust this difficult matter to the One who had delivered us so many times in our Christian experiences.

Scarcely had we ceased praying, when we heard a rustling among the bushes. Whatever was causing this commotion we could not figure out. Nearer and nearer came the sound, and we were somewhat disturbed in our minds as to just what it was that was hunting us out. As we stood gazing in the direction from which the sound came, suddenly there sprang into view through the brush the form of a man dressed in khaki and bearing badges on his breast and on his hat, indicating that he was a government guide. With what joy we greeted him, and how gladly we told him our names and described our predicament. "How did you know we were here?" I inquired. "We were just praying that the Holy Spirit would bring someone to our rescue. We had scarcely

ceased praying before we heard the sound of your approach, and we certainly rejoice that you are here. The Lord surely heard our prayer at once and answered quickly. Do tell us how it is that you found us."

There was an amused expression on the guide's face as he answered our inquiry. "My lookout hut is located across the canyon on a projecting promontory. From this vantage point I can observe with my field glasses most of the paths in these woods. When you men started down "Rattle Snake Trail" from the top of Mt. Wilson, I immediately started after you, for I knew you would never make it to the bottom. No one ever descends the entire length of that path successfully. At the top of the mountain, the trail is quite distinct, but it gradually becomes more indistinct and very few travellers who are enticed by it ever succeed in keeping on it. That is the reason I started at once to find you. I knew just about where you would be lost."

Our hearts were filled with gratitude as we expressed to the guide and to our God the thanksgiving of our hearts. We remembered the Scripture, "Before thy call, I will answer" (Isaiah 65:24). This our Lord had done for us. He knew we would be lost, and therefore had already arranged the guide for our salvation. We told the guide of the thoughts that were going through our hearts. We sought to tell him of the Guide sent from heaven for our eternal salvation. But our message did not meet with a very happy reception, for he was not interested in spiritual matters.

"Will you show us the way out?" we asked.

"No," said the guide, "I will not, because I cannot. There are no marks to direct you, there are no signs at all, so that I cannot give you any instructions. But if you will follow me, I will take you out. I know these woods perfectly, but I cannot tell another. You come along with me, and I will soon put you on the trail again."

Quickly our minds recalled John 14:6— "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." Christ did not come to show us the way, Christ is the way. He will take us through life and bring us to God, but He will not be a "Way-shower," for we are unable to follow either instructions or directions. Again, we told the guide of the wonderful similarity between the salvation he was bringing us from the woods and the

salvation the Saviour brought us from our sins.

We followed our guide, never losing sight of him once along the way, and enjoyed from his lips stories of his experiences in finding other travellers who were lost and helpless in the woods. So we follow Jesus Christ and receive from Him the precious stories in His Word of His wonderful dealings with others, as He led them out of the darkness of unbelief into the narrow path that leads to life.

Soon we were at the path again and pursued our downward journey. Our throats were parched with thirst, our feet were very sore with blisters, but our hearts were rejoicing because we had been found. The guide left us to return to his lookout. How blessed it is that our heavenly Lord does not leave us! He cannot leave us safely to ourselves, for we would soon lose the way and be off the path again. He has said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Hebrews 13:5).

As we neared the bottom of the steep descent, we heard the noise of water as it rushed over the stones on its way down the valley. The noise was tantalizing but enticing. We started to run and after about two blocks we found a stream of delightful, cold water, fresh from the snows of the mountain-top. Falling down on the bank, we drank until we were fully refreshed. Again, we remembered the precious Word of God, which said: "As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country" (Proverbs 25:25). We had both of these, for the good news was the coming of the guide and the cold waters we found in this delightful stream.

There in those attractive surroundings of mountains, trees and loneliness, we knelt to pour out our hearts to God in thanksgiving and praise. The Holy Spirit had watched over us with loving care. We were safe from harm and refreshed in spirit. The remainder of the homeward journey was enriched by songs of praise, and when we arrived at our destination, we were happy to recount the gracious care of our God and His love for His two children.