



# The Light at the End of the Tunnel

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I never pass up an opportunity to go inside a mine to be reminded first hand what miners go through every day. On this occasion I hesitated due to a developing sore throat. Then I heard we'd only be walking in about 150 - 200 meters and limited hard hats would restrict the number of visitors anyway. At the mine entrance, it was decided all of us would go in, hard hats or not, and it turned out to be a **two kilometer trek one way**.

The horizontal tin mine tunnel in Uncia, Bolivia has a narrow railroad track in the middle of it but the ground beneath is damp, uneven and slippery. Dark tunnels appear left and right and many seemingly bottomless pits, along with old, rusty equipment and crude elevators in this old co-operative mine where small groups of miners do their own thing.

About a dozen of us went in, accompanied by two Christian miners from the local church as our guide. Without lights we would certainly have stumbled, fallen. Without my hardhat I might have been knocked out due to several low overhead ceilings that I misjudged. Bang! My head protection did its job yet again.

There are few experiences like going deep inside a mine. When nearing the working rock face, tunnels often narrow to one body size. The fear of a rock fall or roof collapse plays on the mind. There are no safety measures in place here. Will I survive this experience? Miners do this every day! If they don't die inside the mine, their lifespan is usually shortened due to lung degeneration. We noticed the excessive heavy breathing of our main guide who seemed to be suffering in this way, yet he was not old.

Deep inside the mine we came upon a most amazing site, something I had never

seen before. It was a chapel constructed with a cathedral ceiling, an altar with three crosses up above it, candle stands, etc. This was quite a contrast to the statues of the devil one usually sees in Bolivian mines. Perhaps there was a "Tio" in this mine, but we never saw one.



**Front of Chapel inside Uncia Mine, Bolivia**

The other half of our group went into the tin mine in Huanuni and came back with pictures of the mine's devil. I was encouraged that the work of the local church and missionaries is having an impact among these local miners. Praise God.



**Jhonny Horozco follows Stuart as they approach a broken beam**

I was disoriented. It turned out to be almost 2 kilometers away, but I was encouraged as I kept my eyes on that light and kept walking towards it while constantly looking down so as not to slip or fall.

I had plenty of time to reflect on that light as we carefully inched our way towards it, step by step. From the moment I saw it I had an overwhelming sense of being strongly drawn to and attracted by the light and I wanted to do nothing else but move towards it. Slowly but surely that light grew ever larger and larger until we reached the mine's entrance. What followed was a sense of great relief to be free from the close darkness underground and out into a broad place flooded by the wonderful fullness of the light above.

What a wonderful picture of our position in this world. There is physical darkness that can be overcome by light, such as one mounted on a hardhat of a miner inside a mine. If he concentrates, keeping his light focused on the ever present dangers, he won't fall.

Likewise, there is spiritual darkness that can be overcome as we move closer and closer to God's light. As we live, move and have our being here in this dark world full of pitfalls, lies and deception, my prayer is that we will always be on guard and keep moving with God's help towards the fullness of His wonderful light.

### **Symbols**

**Mine** – represents the darkness of this world, dominated by the God of this world.

**Miners** – represent people who are in the world, but don't have to be of the world.

**Miners Hardhat** – represents the helmet of salvation (Eph 6:17) – protection

**Mine Tunnel** – represents the way to go, but like Pilgrim's Progress, there are many detours and potential pitfalls.

**Miners Light** – represents knowing the way to safety and provides the opportunity for taking it.

**Mine Exit** – represents great light and freedom from the bondage of this world. Spiritually, are we drawn to that light or do we prefer to remain in darkness?

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