

Paying Attention

We were carrying our own death warrant with us, and it taught us not to rely on ourselves but only on God ...He will save us again.

2 Cor. 1:9-10

Saint Paul paid attention to his suffering. Difficult though suffering can be at times, his letters challenge us to look beyond suffering and see it in a new light. It was a “thorn” that humbled him to keep him “from getting too proud.” (2 Cor. 12:7). Loss was seen as a way to receive new insights and depth.

There is an Islamic tale about a man whose son brought home six wild horses. “What a blessing,” said his father’s friends. “We’ll see,” said the father. The next day the son broke his leg while riding one of the new found stallions. “What a pity!” cried the neighbours. “We’ll see,” replied the father. Then the Emperor’s servant arrived to conscript all the young men into the army for an impending campaign, but because of the broken leg, the son was exempted. “How lucky,” the father was told. “How do we know?” he replied. One person’s tragedy is another person’s opportunity.

What happens to us is not nearly as important as how we react to what happens to us. Grace is the gift that comes when we pay attention to our suffering, when we walk with a bearing of acceptance rather than escape, of courage rather than anger.

In some ways we create our own realities. When scientists examine light, if they look for particles, they find them; and if they look for waves, they find them as well! Sometimes we can avoid reality, but not for long. Christians see that at its core, reality comes out of God’s loving heart. Everything that is or can be originates there, and so is marked with his love.



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