



water from rock

## Selah: Stop, Look, Listen- June 17, 2023

The Lord be with you.

I'm looking at an email here from a dear friend who tells me that she's in a dark place that she's struggling with depression.

Well, I know something about depression. I remember a time when the biggest victory of my day was just getting out of bed in the morning. And, and so I wanna share with you a passage of scripture that's been a real lifeline for me and, and I hope that it might encourage you today if you're in some kind of darkness and that it might also help you as you seek to encourage others.

I'm looking at the Apostle Paul's second letter to the Corinthians chapter one verses eight and nine that I'm going to read and that I want to think about with you for a few moments. I read, "We do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly unbearably crushed that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death so that we would not rely on ourselves, but on God who raises the dead." I have to admire the great Apostle Paul's honesty here, his vulnerability as well as he's one of the key leaders of the early church. And here he is opening up to us about his affliction, about feeling utterly unbearably crush and about how he has despaired of life itself.

Now, Paul does not go into details about what happened to him in the Roman Province of Asia Minor. It's, it's something that we're not told about in the Book of Acts. But you know, Paul who always seems to make light of his physical sufferings and the many threats to his life and there were many. Well here, Paul does open up to us about his spiritual anguish, his mental suffering as Paul wants readers to know that the darkness that he suffered. He wants to help readers to know that when we're looking at darkness, when we're facing despair, depression that Paul had faced something that felt beyond his endurance. And here Paul is being a wounded healer. He is ministering to us from out of his woundedness. As Paul acknowledges he says we were so utterly unbearably crushed that we despaired of life itself. Paul says that they were feeling well that they were feeling at the end of their rope that they felt they were facing something too heavy for them to bear. That's, that's the idea. That's, that's the force of Paul's words here that, that they were just feeling completely overwhelmed. Things were so bad that they didn't think they were going to make it. We were so utterly unbearably crushed that we despaired of life itself.

Ok, keep in mind here that this is the same Apostle Paul who from a Roman prison could write. He said he could say I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me and, and yet now Paul has come to a dark place in the road where he says that he despaired of life itself.



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You know, I can, I can imagine it was hard for Paul to get up in the morning, hard to have energy for anything. Paul adds these words. He says, he says, indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death, the sentence of death. Now that that phrase intrigued me. And so I did a little Greek word study here and I found that the Greek word translated sentence that it is a rare Greek word. It is the word apokrima. That's A P O K R I M A. And, and you know, this is the only place in all of the New Testament that the word Apokrima is used. And I think that it might be a word that Paul has learned from his colleague, Luke. That is doctor Luke because one of the meanings of apokrima is that it is the opinion, it is the prognosis that a doctor gives for the case before him or her. The doctor looks at what is going on and then gives the prognosis or, or the way that he thinks things are going to turn out and, and Paul says, well, you know, we, we looked at everything that was happening to us and, and, and we felt that we had received the prognosis of death. I mean, we told ourselves that, you know, this was the end that there was no way out that we were dead men walking that Paul felt no power to pick himself up and go on.

Now, why is all of this happening now? To Paul? Paul says, indeed, we, we felt that we had received the prognosis of death. He says, so that, so that in order that Paul here uses the Greek word, hina, that's H I N A, it is a word that introduces a purpose clause in Greek grammar. So here is a purpose that Paul sees in this. He says, indeed, we felt that we had received the prognosis of death that is in order that to the purpose that we would not rely on ourselves, but on God who raises the dead.

Here's how the message version of the Bible translates this as it says as it turned out, it was the best thing that could have happened in that instead of trusting in our own strength or wit to get us out of it, we were forced to trust God totally. Not a bad idea since he is a God who raises the dead end of quote, Paul says, we were we, we were forced to trust God. Totally. Paul. Paul says that that was the message to Him and his despair. That was the message of feeling no way out so that we would not rely on ourselves, but on God.

Sometimes I hear people say God never gives us more than we can bear. I don't find that in the Bible. Paul seems to think that God does sometimes give us more than we can bear. He does it so that we might come to trust in Him totally and find in Him the way out.

And so I wonder today, do you think God might be calling you to trust in Him? Totally. Paul has been walking with God for years, serving God faithfully and you know, even Paul has new lessons to learn about trusting God, new lessons, to learn about living confidently in God's love and power where instead of trusting in our own strength, in our own wits, we trust God totally. I mean, that's the way God created us to live, the way that God intends you and me to live today. Yes, the end of our rope is a very difficult place, but it is a very, very good place as we learn to trust in God.

I'm Tim Smith, a fellow traveler. Thank you for listening. Until next time.