



water from rock

Selah: Stop, Look, Listen – January 16, 2021

I Lord be with you.

I have an email here from a dear friend who tells me that she's in a place of darkness, she's struggling with depression. I so appreciate my friend's honesty. I've heard from quite a few people recently that they're depressed as 2020 was a hard year on all of us and 2021 isn't looking all that great itself. And what with the pandemic, the threat of disease, not being able to see people, churches closed places, we like to go closed, economic uncertainty. Why I know depression, I know where the biggest victory of my day was just getting out of bed in the morning, and so I wanna share with you a passage of scripture that has been a real lifeline for me. I hope it might encourage you and help you as you seek to encourage others.

I'm looking at the Apostle Paul second letter to the Corinthians Chapter 1, verses 8 and 9, that I'm going to read and then I wanna think about it with you. I began, "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 admire Paul's honesty here, his vulnerability as he's one of the key leaders of the early church, and he's opening up to us about affliction, about being utterly unbearably crushed. About how he despaired of life itself. Paul does not go into detail about what happened to him in Asia, it's something that we're not told about in The Book of Acts, but Paul seems to always make light up as physical sufferings and the many threats to his life and there were many, but Paul does open up to us about his mental suffering, about his spiritual anguish. As Paul want readers to know the darkness that he suffered, to help readers to know that when we're looking at darkness, when we're facing despair, depression, that Paul had faced something beyond his endurance, Paul was being a wounded healer, he is ministering to us from out of His woundedness.

As Paul acknowledges, we were so utterly unbearably crushed that we despaired of life itself. Paul says that they were feeling that they were feeling at the end of the road, as they were facing something too heavy for them to bear. That's the idea, the force of Paul's words here, that they were completely overwhelmed, things were so bad that they didn't think they were going to make it. That's all wrapped up in Paul's words here. We were so utterly unbearably crushed that we as despaired of life itself. Keep in mind that this is the same Apostle Paul, who from a Roman prison could write, I can do all things to Christ who strengthens me. And yet Paul has come to a dark place in the road. Where he says that, he despaired of life itself. I can well imagine that it was hard for Paul to get up in the morning, hard to have energy for anything, and then Paul adds, "Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death." The sentence of death. Well, that phrase intrigued me, and so I did a little Greek word study, and I found that the Greek word translated sentence, it is a rare Greek word. It is the word apokrima, A-P-O-K-R-I-M-A. And this is the only place that all of



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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 Dr. Luke, because one of the meanings of apokrima is that it is the opinion, it is the prognosis. The prognosis that a doctor gives for the case before him. The doctor looks at what is going on, and then he gives his prognosis or the way he thinks things are going to go. And Paul says, well, we had looked at everything that was happening to us, and we felt that we had received the prognosis of death, we told ourselves that this was the end, that there was no way out that we were dead men walking, as Paul felt no power to pick himself up and to go on.

Now, why is all this happening right now, Paul says, indeed, we felt that we had received the prognosis of death so that, so that, here Paul uses the Greek word hina that's H-I-N-A, that introduces a purpose clause in Greek grammar. Here is the purpose, indeed we felt that we had received the prognosis of death, so that or to the purpose that we would not rely on ourselves, but on God who raises the dead. Here's how the message version translates this phrase, "As it turned out, it was the best thing that could have happened instead of trusting in our own strength or wits to get us out of it. We were forced to trust God, totally. Not a bad idea, since he is the God who raises the dead." End of quote. We were forced to trust God totally. Paul says, that was a message and Paul's despair. That was the message of no way out. So that, so that we would rely not on ourselves, but on God.

And I wonder today, what do you think God might be calling you to trust Him totally? Paul has been walking with God for your serving God faithfully for years, and 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 his own strength, his own wits, he trusts in God totally. That's the way God created us to live. The way God intends you and me to live. Yes, the end of our rope is a very, very difficult place. But it is a very, very good place as we learn to trust in God.

I am Tim Smith, a fellow traveler. Thanks for listening until next time.