

Chronicles of Diversity

Your leadership weekly



St. Paul's Mission in NE Washington

The deep

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How deep is deep?

I ask this metaphysical question in regards to the condition of the human personality. This is the gift I had a small opportunity to glimpse during the early morning hours of March 3, 2003 (03/03/03 @ 0303). While the actual hour may only be an approximation, my troubles with my arrhythmic heart began about 10 PM and I roused from my condition about 7 AM.

Before I try to discuss what occurred during that time however, I would like to state again the perspective that the Lord gave me as I approached my operation, subsequent events, and recovery.

For the month preceding my operation I could see each day leading me to the date where I would have to lay my body on the table, let the physicians hook me up to the heart lung machine, stop my heart, fix what needed to be fixed and then begin the process of living a life stating, "Not only is God not through with me yet, perhaps he has just begun."

While I have told virtually everyone recently that I am now just getting a small understanding of the word "recovery," I have made amazing strides according to those who seem to be aware of these types of things. I got off of pain medications because they messed with my digestive system more than the pain they relieved. My weight is now back to normal, relative to when I went in, losing more than thirty pounds of fluid in the last couple of weeks.

In context, even before I entered into the hospital I was aware, that I was about to receive a gift, that only the grace of God could provide. As I move beyond that time, I am even more cognizant that this is a gift, for God's own pleasure and my edification, and the continued reformation, or restoration of the church during this time.

When I discussed my experience of the morning of March 3rd with a friend, he forwarded me a email, calling the church to pray for a variety of reasons on that date. After checking those sources,

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doing other research, and praying, I have peace in submitting that my situation in those early morning hours had nothing to do with the occurrence of those prayerful opportunities.

Those who know me quite well know that at times I can recall and link successfully a diverse series of facts, or other relationships. My problem stems with not knowing, or being able to recall the address of this information. Much of this relates to how God organized my brain, definitely some has to do with my personal lack of that type of discipline.

I know pastors and teachers who can memorize entire books of the Bible. I have trouble memorizing a simple Bible verse, especially if you include where it is written. I definitely think it would be easier for me to flap my arms and fly around the room, than to commit the Book of Ephesians to memory.

All this is just a round about way of saying, that recalling the impressions that God gave me that morning I shall easily remember, but being able to recall the date it happened, especially a number of years down the pilgrims trail, will be much more difficult. Hence, because of His love, and His grace for me, He brought this all to take place about, 03/03/03 @ 0303.

So how deep is the human personality?

If we begin with Solomon's, "life under the sun," in the book of Ecclesiastes, or Thoreau's, "most men live lives of quite desperation," it is like peeling off the layers of an onion, until all you are left with is the kernel of your life.

At that point matter, time and what we deem to call important are all stripped away and I was in that seed condition in the presence of God. What was completely overwhelming about that brief instance was an unfathomable understanding, (and I realize that makes no real sense) of the grace of God.

I, the created, by God's grace was having a conversation with the Creator of the universe. This being Elohim of Genesis One. The essential point being that in Genesis 1:26. I was made in the image of God, and that was the basis for all the layers that were added above, unto the reality of my situation laying in my hospital bed at the University of Washington.

As a general rule, much of modern evangelicalism practices a theology of the present glory of God's kingdom, That trivial, but dangerous pursuit, was not even present in even a skin of one of the onion's layers. What was overwhelming was the presence of God's grace and the importance of sound historic Christian doctrine.

For lack of better understanding, I was allowed this opportunity to get a glimpse of the depth of human personalty on the basis of the Sola's of the Reformation. By grace alone, by faith alone, through Christ alone, through scripture alone, for God's Glory.

Those layers were far above the condition I was now laying, but I was very impressed that the importance of sound doctrine and the authority of scripture, continued down to this level. Not only was I created in the image of God, but it did not take place over eons of time. I was at the point where time began, but at the same time completely in the present, and for lack of a better description, they were not that far distant, one from the other.

So what else do I remember about this episode. One thing was the fact that I was securely in the land of the living. Death was absolutely, absolutely not a possibility. I was with God and it was so.

I was also continually aware that this importance of doctrine, related to my gift. Others without this mind changing witness in there lives are not so blessed, even though I have no concept of what that may mean to others, but I definitely feel that warm fuzzy emotions would not cut it.

I have no idea how long I lay in that state. As I walked around the hospital floor about 10 PM the night before, I sensed an impending spiritual battle beginning to take place throughout this section of the hospital, and from talking with my nurse the following morning, I was told it was a very difficult shift not only in my room, but through out the floor.

In my deep state I could sense that storm, but was completely assured that it was just a storm that God allowed in His sovereignty. This I must caution was not the depths of Scheol described in Jonah and other Old Testament writers. This was a New Testament provision, somewhat comparable to "We

are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.” **2 Corinthians 5:8**. Except without the death and out of body experience.

I was also impressed with the truth of scripture, the whole counsel of God. Beginning with the creation story and continuing until the end of time. While the revelation of scripture is complete, its fulfillment is not yet so. We live in a time where we can by faith see the death, resurrection, and ascension to heaven of Jesus Christ, but must live in anticipation of a wilderness pilgrimage, which will one day be cut short because of His return in temporal glory.

As time flowed on, though I had no real sense of time, I began to realize that my condition was in some way affected by drugs. Perhaps a better way to describe it, was that the drugs were limiting my return to the conscious world. As a final thought, I felt suggested that the effect of those drugs were under my personal control. With that in mind, having received the blessing I felt I received, I sat up in bed about 7 AM, without feeling any drug effect. It was time to get on with the rest of my promised life. The nurse, then working on the medical machinery I was attached to, was somewhat in shock that I was so alert.

So what have I gained from this deep experience. First of all I have no regrets for the life I have lived thus far, but this fresh insight has made me cherish not only the life we live, but also and perhaps more importantly, the opportunity that God has given us to live beyond our perceptions of security. To live in the true security that comes from God. I understand I have been given a gift to share and to encourage those I come in contact with, the truth of **Proverbs 3:5,6**:

*Trust in the LORD with all your heart,
And lean not on your own understanding;
In all your ways acknowledge Him,
And He shall direct your paths.*

Another verse that seems quite appropriate to the complexity of this message, in this modern age with the total lack of timeless attributes is **Romans 12:1,2**:

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Seeds for Prayer

My visiting nurse told me Monday that Thursday would be her last visit to check my level of anti-coagulant drugs. After that point, by definition, I will no longer be home bound. Over the next couple of weeks I have meetings with my doctor, cardiologist, and surgeon, pray that those meetings will go well and my healing will continue without complications.

As the war with Iraq begins, please intercede for the collision troops and their families. That God would not only provide a hedge of protection, but also the Force that fights the battle.

It is a blessing to see that at least few leaders of the world are willing to potentially sacrifice their careers for what they believe is the right thing to do. Others however, continue to look only at their own, short term interest. This could bring about a significant change in the global political atmosphere. That could turn out to be a real blessing, at least in the courageous countries, and an opportunity for evangelism in the other portions of our world. Please intercede for God to make those opportunities and adventures, clear to His church and that we would use these events to bring glory to God.