

Lenten Devotional March 27, 2018

Scripture

2 Corinthians 1:8-22

⁸We 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. ⁹Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death so that we would rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. ¹⁰He who rescued us from so deadly a peril will continue to rescue us; on him we have set our hope that he will rescue us again, ¹¹as you also join in helping us by your prayers, so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted us through the prayers of many. ¹²Indeed, this is our boast, the testimony of our conscience: we have behaved in the world with frankness and godly sincerity, not by earthly wisdom but by the grace of God—and all the more toward you. ¹³For we write you nothing other than what you can read and also understand; I hope you will understand until the end—¹⁴as you have already understood us in part—that on the day of the Lord Jesus we are your boast even as you are our boast. ¹⁵Since I was sure of this, I wanted to come to you first, so that you might have a double favor; ¹⁶I wanted to visit you on my way to Macedonia, and to come back to you from Macedonia and have you send me on to Judea. ¹⁷Was I vacillating when I wanted to do this? Do I make my plans according to ordinary human standards, ready to say “Yes, yes” and “No, no” at the same time? ¹⁸As surely as God is faithful, our word to you has not been “Yes and No.” ¹⁹For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, whom we proclaimed among you, Silvanus and Timothy and I, was not “Yes and No”; but in him it is always “Yes.” ²⁰For in him every one of God’s promises is a “Yes.” For this reason it is through him that we say the “Amen,” to the glory of God. ²¹But it is God who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us, ²²by putting his seal on us and giving us his Spirit in our hearts as a first installment.

Devotional

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“Why the tough seasons?” The answer to such a question is not always as immediately lucid as Crystal Pepsi, but my own life’s winters serve as times in which God’s grace shined the brightest . . . more brightly than in the “winning” (to steal the over-hashtagged term) moments. God’s Isaiah 41:10 promise of presence at all times is a “yes” and gets my hearty “amen” because he has shown up at hours when I thought hope was more sunk than the S.S. Titanic was on April 16, 1912.

Sometimes God breaks the world around us to convey that he alone is enough, that his promises are true, and that we can say we concur in the midst of all earthly hellishness. As someone once told me, “You don’t know God is all you need until God is all you’ve got.” Cliché? Maybe. True? As true as the Penguins’ 2017 winning of Lord Stanley for the second time in a row.

From a humble, broken-world posture, we are often most able to see God’s astounding magnificence and give God praise . . . not to mention that we have a comforting Christ, who understands us fully in affliction. And that makes all the difference.

To God, the One who rescues us from our seeming death sentences so that we see his omnipotent hand and everlasting grace and love more fully, be all glory around the globe and forevermore.

Prayer

Father, we might not understand our afflictions fully in this life, but we know you are always with us because of the life, death, resurrection, ascension, and reigning of dear Jesus. Please shower us with your grace during troubled times that we may magnify your name. In Jesus’ name. Amen.