

THE MOTHER OF EUTYCHUS

Acts 20: 7-12

Oh let me share with you, tell you, what God has done for us.
So many have now heard of Paul the missionary.
We had first known and feared him by his former name and reputation.
A violent tool of the Sadducees and High Priests,
Sorely challenging their first early steps of Christianity and faith in God.
But since then what a conversion had taken place!
Spreading the true Gospel, preaching and healing, proving his words.
And now he'd come to our home village, - Troas. One of his disciples had a relative here.
And what a blessing that gave us, what an opportunity to see him first hand.

It was the first day of the week. A group of his disciples had gathered together, with many from the village, to break bread. We'd got to know them well, and it was a happy occasion.
Our whole family was present, huddled somewhat in the upper chamber, although our eldest son had typically sat way up in the third loft. I don't think he really wanted to come.

Paul stood up and began to speak.

I say speak rather than preach. It was as though he was chatting to each of us individually, a normal conversation recounting his adventures, for such they truly were, but inter-twined with each an explanation and assessment of Scripture that was so pertinent and made so relevant to our daily lives.

He talked at length about his conversion. For him, the change had been so radical it came as a blinding light. Sudden and intense guilt at his mocking presence at Stephen's stoning to death, the countless Christians roughly and aggressively led to Jerusalem and killed, - his mission in life so mis-placed that he marvelled at how wrong he could have been. His sudden blindness! - the once so-mighty Saul being led by the hand, humbled by the words of Jesus that shook him to the core. Three long days of thinking, fasting, learning to trust.

He painted a picture so vivid we could feel the hot dry dust blown and scattered by his shuffling feet, as he was led on the road to Damascus. But far more importantly we could also feel with him the hand-hold of the Christ, - both in his re-living and sharing of his experience as he talked amongst us. And he asked us, as he asked himself so many times on his journey, how would this Ananias respond? How brave he was!! How trusting!! And because of that he was healed of his blindness.

Paul was now listening to God. How many miles had he travelled, how many people had he seen, how many now healed? And he was now here, with us, God's vessel of proclamation, sharing with us his love of the gospel, sharing how he now felt always protected by the Lord.

As Paul talked on, the night fell deep. The oil in the lamps was replenished, fresh candles were lit,. His face was shining, glowing against the lamplight, but with its own inner radiance. I looked round at the gathering. They were spell bound, - not caught up in some hypnotic worship but living with Paul his sense of Life and sharing his knowledge of Love. There wasn't a cough or a shuffle, - the unfolding of Scripture was just so natural. The healings described not so much miracles but the telling of what God's love and Jesus' demonstrations meant in practice. We'd learned from other disciples the key message that God's kingdom was here and now, experienced the instantaneous healings that proved we didn't need to wait to find heaven, but could experience it at this instant. But with Paul I'd learnt something new. How to forget the past. It was only relevant if

you held on to it! True forgiveness was won at the moment of repentance, - when thinking so changed that earlier positions were no longer tenable or allowed into consciousness. Paul's recounting of his conversion was not phrased in terms of regret of his past, - but an acceptance of its history *being* history, no longer part of him. His present actions were what mattered - his closeness to Jesus, his love for mankind, his desire to share what he knew with open arms and heart.

Midnight was drawing near, and Paul continued in full flow. I looked at my family with such a feeling of love, impelled to hold them in God's care. I glanced up to see Eutychus, but he was hidden from sight. I felt my love for him as more than just a mother, aspiring to that self-same Christliness that so emanated from Paul.

"NO!!" A sudden cry reverberated round where we were gathered!

In those few few seconds before we heard that awful thump outside I knew my son needed me. How can such a short time contain a million thoughts? A mother's instinct and anguish forcibly brought back to everything Paul was talking about, - God being Life, Love, holding all His children in his arms. Did I *really* believe what he had been saying! I grasped my husband's hands, seeking his assurance and support. God is Life! Believe it! Know it! Feel the active presence of the Christ! Hold fast to the Truth!

Gaius reached him first. Touched the tangled body. Looked up at Paul, looked up at all of us.

"I'm so sorry. The young man is dead."

It was as though Paul had not heard him. He didn't rush. He walked calmly to where my son lay. I hugged my husband and two girls, praying oh so praying. I felt the support of everyone turning to God and trying so hard to trust.

Paul wrapped the boy in a warm embrace, breathing evenly, peacefully. He too was praying, knowing. Living in the present.

We all watched from where we were. He turned his face and somehow knew to look at us.

"Trouble not yourselves: for his life is in him."

My son stirred. Opened his eyes, staring at Paul, seeming to drink in and draw strength from his knowledge of life everlasting. He turned and saw me. Got up as though nothing had happened and ran to my arms. No words were necessary. We were blessed by the pure presence of Love, the touch of the Christ even more tangible than before.

We stopped to break bread. We took ours directly from Paul. I didn't know what to say to him; his outstretched hand touched my cheek with tenderness. Our thoughts met and rejoiced. I kept looking at Eutychus. Unmarked and unblemished. So wide awake now and serene. He looked back at me, his broad smile a visual acknowledgement of new life.

And how that simple ceremony has transformed itself in our hearts. It ever reminds us to live in the present, to be alive. To always rejoice.

Paul preached on til break of day. I remember him saying: "**Behold, now is the accepted time, behold, now is the day of salvation**". Every word spoken with the authority of a man of God and a man with God, every word ringing true with experience.

We spoke once more at sunrise, bringing Eutychus with us. He gave us all a loving hug and a final blessing. As he left, we felt the power of the Christ at work among us all. We had grown in grace and love and felt such immeasurable comfort and healing.

As I watched him walk away, these thoughts rang through my consciousness: God is Life, here and now. Everywhere and ever present.

Paul has proved his words: our lives are always safe. My son is alive, and the glory of God is shining through us all!

We are alive with His Love!

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