

God Moves in a Mysterious Way

Now

One of the hymns that stirs me most is “God Moves in a Mysterious Way” and never have I appreciated the truth of its lyrics as I have in the past three weeks. There have been so many lessons during that time, it would be impossible to recount all of them, but I would like to share three.

As of three weeks ago today, our 20-year old daughter’s life seemed to be spinning out of control, heading to destruction because of her greed, impatience, and surrender to the lies of this world. Then, at 2:00 a.m. on May 16, we received the phone call from the hospital emergency room, informing us that our daughter that been seriously injured in an automobile accident near Little Rock. The metaphor of a life speeding out of control, heading to inevitable disaster, had become literal.

I do not know if God caused the car wreck or if He only used it for His purposes, but I know that it is part of His mysterious ways. After seeing the condition of the car in which she was a passenger, I know that God preserved our daughter’s life. That she received no head injuries is nothing short of miraculous. Because of the accident, our daughter has now returned to us in Delaware, her activities brought to a halt. She will now have a lot of time to rethink her decisions and her commitments. Doctors tell us her complete recovery will take about two years.

In the meantime, the driver of the car, a young man from a solid background but on a similarly disastrous path, suffered relatively minor injuries. Part of God’s mysterious ways in this case seems to be His perfect knowledge of what each of these young people needed as a wake-up call. Our daughter apparently needed a lot of time; the driver apparently needed the sudden shock of the pain and sorrow he caused another. There is evidence that both lives have been permanently changed.

The second lesson may not seem very mysterious but it would be to many outside the church. For a variety of reasons, my wife could not fly down to Little Rock for a few days. We knew our daughter’s injuries were not life-threatening, but it was still very hard for my wife to wait. The time did, however, allow me to find someplace for her to stay after she arrived and I would be temporarily returning to Delaware. Calling on an elder I know in Searcy, Arkansas, I asked if he could locate a family in Little Rock. The couple he identified was exactly what my wife needed during her stay there. They went far beyond mere hospitality and have become life-long friends. Those who believe the church is an institution or a building miss the point. The church—the bride of Christ and His continuing emissary to the world—is people like Bob and Eleanor.

The third and final mystery I want to recount is one which I have not and probably will not fully figure out, at least during this life. My wife's father was diagnosed with lung cancer two years ago and given one year to live. During Charlene's stay in the ICU, I gave him and his wife daily updates on her condition, and he was already aware that we were very concerned about her decisions prior to the accident. He knew we were committed to getting our daughter home as soon as possible but we were unsure where we would get the nearly \$10,000 required for an air ambulance.

A week into our daughter's ICU stay, I returned to Delaware to get some work done, and received a letter from my father-in-law containing a check for \$10,000. You may view this as simply a case of Christian charity, but my father-in-law was not a Christian—he and his wife (whom he married after my wife's mother died some years ago), in fact, appear to be atheists. He has resisted the discussions my wife and I tried to have with him, particularly in the last two years.

I returned to Arkansas last weekend, and Tuesday things fell together to get our daughter on an air ambulance back to Delaware, thanks to my father-in-law's check. Moments after the plane took off from Little Rock, I received a call from one of his wife's daughters that he was fading fast. I asked her to tell him that his granddaughter was on her way home thanks to him. He died before the air ambulance landed in Delaware.

One way to look at this is that he gave my wife a wonderful gift to remember him by after being less than an ideal father. That is certainly true. But I believe something even more powerful and mysterious occurred. I don't believe in coincidences, so the fact that he died during the ambulance flight has some significance. Somehow during the last minutes of his life, Jesus ministered to him and the Father lifted the veil. Oh, I know—what about confession, repentance, and baptism?

Some of us are so certain of "God's plan of salvation" that we risk robbing God of His power and sovereignty. I believe in what the Bible teaches about salvation, yet I also believe God's universe is far more mysterious than we poor humans can possibly appreciate. I won't know for sure until I get there, but I suspect I'll see my father-in-law in heaven—not because of this single act of kindness on his part, but because of God's Grace. And sometime still later, his granddaughter will join us, thanks in some small measure to his generous deed.

Discussion

Postscript, 2006: Unfortunately, but without going into details, our hopes for our daughter have (as of now) not turned out as we would have wished. She has healed physically, but otherwise, the story is unfinished.



Unsure about or don't agree with something in Ekklesia Then & Now? First, be a Berean (Acts 17:10-11). If you still disagree, post a message so we can all share in the discussion!

NEXT ISSUE: New Testament Apocrypha: Gospels (June 15)

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