Headed to the Courtroom

June 18, 2013

Yesterday I was selected to serve on a jury for a trial that is anticipated to last three to four weeks. The jury selection process was an all-day affair, lasting over twelve hours and creating quite a sense of camaraderie in the process.

I keep thinking about the three major take-aways from this experience.

First, the multiple defense attorneys for the four defendants (thus the long trial) repeatedly reminded us that the American justice system is built on the foundation of "presumed innocent until proven guilty." And that is a very, very good thing, as horror stories emerge from countries where instant "justice" is meted out in cutting off or crushing limbs of those accused of stealing. And in countries where "mob justice" is part of everyday life. (See my blog post When God Does Nothing About Injustice.)

But it's not like that before God. Not a single one of us can protest innocence. Not only is every single one of us a sinner from conception (Ps. 51:5), but God knows every thought we think before we ever act on it. A totally holy, perfect God knows that we may be innocent of crimes before other men, but we are not innocent before Him.

Except that Jesus swapped His perfection and righteousness for our messed up guilt. It's like the judge coming down from his elevated seat, taking off his robes, and saying to a defendant that was just declared guilty, "I'll be taking your punishment for you." Amazing.

My second takeaway is gratitude for the teaching and experience in filtering life through a biblical filter. I am

especially grateful for the wisdom of Proverbs 18:17—"The first to present his case seems right, till another comes forward and questions him." All of us potential jurors were strongly encouraged to use common sense, and evaluate carefully everything we would hear. And (not surprisingly), the defense attorneys asked us not to draw any conclusions until we had heard everything. Those could be just platitudes, but since I know that God's Word said it first, it is my determined course of action.

The third takeaway is the importance of embracing God's right to put a long trial on my calendar. He is God; He has the right to interrupt my plans and put whatever He wants on my schedule. I had an idea of what I would be doing during the day over the next month, but God had different plans. I choose to trust Him and keep letting go of my impatient, wrong-headed belief that I should get to decide my agenda.

Then in one breathtaking moment, I had a paradigm shift that erupted in a heartfelt "Oh, *thank* You Lord!": the realization that this is nothing compared to the way a cancer diagnosis crashes into one's schedule, with a very different set of unwanted appointments on it. I'm pretty sure my sister Nanci, fighting breast cancer, would swap her chemo treatments with my courtroom dates in a heartbeat.

So the adventure with God continues . . .

This blog post originally appeared at
blogs.bible.org/tapestry/headed-to-the-courtroom