

A TESTIMONY: NOT MY TIME YET

Naas le Roux
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This is the message we have heard from Him and announced to you, that God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all (1 John 1:5).

The angels ... are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation? (Heb. 1:13-14).

Dear Kerugma Supporter,

REMARKABLE RECOVERY FROM A SEVERE HEART ATTACK

In the previous Kerugma Bulletin, my wife Marina mentioned to you that I suffered a severe heart attack on 20 November 2013. In fact, I should have died, but the Lord chose differently and gave me a remarkable recovery. We just want to thank all of you from the depth of our hearts for your kind support and for your prayers that came so spontaneously from everywhere. I would like to tell you about two very significant experiences that I was privileged to have during this time. I am telling this to the best of my ability just as it happened. At the end I will make some remarks about it.

FIRST EXPERIENCE

The first experience was when I had the heart attack. Now you must understand that, due to various reasons, this heart attack came very unexpectedly. By the grace of God I can say that neither of my parents (presently aged 94 and 88 respectively) have experienced any heart problems throughout their lives. Many years ago a professor in cardiology at the Universitas Hospital in Bloemfontein, after performing several tests, assured me that I would never die due to my heart. Through the years more than one physician confirmed this.

Back in South Africa (shortly after our filming expedition with Dr Randall Smith in Italy during September 2013) while swimming, I experienced a slight tightness in the chest. I went to see our general practitioner who took an ECG and on examining my heart, said: "If there is someone that will never suffer a heart attack, it is you." I mention this so that you can understand why this heart attack came as a complete surprise to all of us. Furthermore, as I understand, amongst other things, both high cholesterol and high blood pressure are high risk factors with regard to heart attacks. About three years ago the same general practitioner encouraged me to work hard at bringing down the level of my cholesterol by changing my diet and regular exercise, which I did. When he undertook the ECG as well as during the 15 days that I was in the hospital due to the heart attack, my cholesterol level was, as they explained to me, on the most ideal level that one would like to have it. Furthermore, through the grace of God I never suffered from high blood pressure. On the contrary, my blood pressure is always to the low side.

On the day of the heart attack I had gone for massage (for pain in my left shoulder) to a biokineticist who practiced at the gym I regularly attended. As usual I did not exercise after a massage but went for a swim, during which time something very strange happened. I swam two laps and while waiting a few seconds before swimming another lap, I heard a strange 'grrrr'-sound. The pair of goggles that I used had a thick elastic bridge (purchased as they were built to last) between the two lens-frames. I heard how this elastic started to tear from the top downwards. It was as if two claws were tearing it apart and the glasses swung away from my eyes. I could not believe it. There I stood with the broken pair of goggles in my hands. I could not swim any longer. I then went for a shower, dressed myself and as I was about to leave the dressing room, I felt the same slight tightness in the chest as I had felt a few weeks before. I sat down on the wooden bench in the center of the room and took a few deep breaths, thinking the tightness would go away as had happened before. It did not, but only intensified until it felt as though an elephant was sitting on my chest. I then asked a student who just entered the room, to go to reception to call for help. I knew from what the biokineticist had told me previously that the staff of the gym were trained in first aid. When the young boy left, I lay down on the bench waiting for help to arrive. The next moment I heard the voice of the receptionist over the intercom ordering all personnel to go to the men's dressing room. A while later she announced again and requested that if there happened to be any medical doctor in the facility, to please report to reception. The next moment I heard a voice ask me to say my name; the name of my wife and then her telephone number. As I gave the last digit of our telephone number, I knew I would not be able to repeat it. He then asked what day of the week it was, and I could not tell. The next thing I knew was that I was dreaming; at least this is how I experienced it. It is this first experience that I share with you.

Two weeks after I was released from hospital, I visited the gym to thank them for their help. They then told me that a few seconds after I passed out, my face turned completely dark. They resuscitated me twice and also shocked me four times. While all of this was happening I was unaware of my surroundings, not even remembering that I was in the gym. I was in a totally different place. To me it felt like I was dreaming. I am saying this because I normally cannot

remember my dreams well enough to repeat them. However, this was like a dream, except that I can remember all the details vividly. I was in what I would call a huge cube of light. I was traveling fast in the purest light imaginable. There were no shadows, everything was light but the light, although very bright, was soft on my eyes. I could look into it without a problem. It was as if we were moving upwards till I could see to my left what looked like the wall of a room and I also started to see the ceiling although very vaguely. We were moving slower now and it was as if two people were holding me by my shoulders, carrying me upwards to the ceiling. One thing that stood out from this experience was the peace that was there. It was as if the whole place was filled with a very tangible peace that was around me and went through me. Both the light and the peace are something that I do not know how to describe for it was like something I have never experienced before – and have not been able to explain or relive since. To me it is far above what one can imagine or express in normal human terms. As I was engulfed by this wonderful peace, I was moved upwards, but also from side to side very much the same as when one would throw a coin into water and it goes down by swinging from side to side. While moving like this I could see that the walls were yellow in colour. The vast ceiling was white with something that looked almost like square frames at certain places. As I moved closer to the ceiling it had the appearance of a cloud that one could just travel straight through. And then it happened. Just as I was to go through the ceiling it was as if a decision was made and there came a voice. It was as if I could see the letters and hear the words, without either seeing the letters or hearing the words. The words came as a voice that just went through me and I heard it very distinctly inside of me. I do not know how to describe it better than I have done. It was a clear strong voice that just said: “It is not yet his time”.

The next moment it felt to me as if ten donkeys were kicking me simultaneously and I flew through the air while screaming my lungs out. I fell back and as I was lying on the hard bench hearing the relief of the gym’s personnel, there were many aspects that I knew and was intensely aware of. One was that although the Lord had ‘sent me back’, I would now be facing a tough time, before having recovered enough to do what God required of me to complete before taking me to be with Him in glory. In spite of knowing this, I had the confidence that He would take me through it. He obviously had a purpose in wanting me to return.

I also knew exactly what I still needed to do before I could go home to be with my Lord. I knew which projects I still needed to complete, of which some were long-term. I further knew that I now lived on borrowed time, as it were. It thus became distinctly clear to me that from this time on the Lord wanted us to spend all our time and effort only on the completion of His work. Up until this time we have lived by faith, trusting the Lord to provide for all that we need for our own lives as well as for His work. At times the Lord would lead us to work on a (secular) project for or with someone through which funds would be generated for the ministry of Kerugma Productions. During this time, we were again asked to quote for a large project. But it had now become very clear to me that we were to quit spending any time or effort with regards to such projects in the future – but to be fully and totally committed to spending our time and ministry on His work alone.

On one of Marina’s first visits at the hospital, before I had a chance to tell her about what I experienced, she told me that she was convinced that the Lord desired that we were to stop all involvement in secular projects. What a wonderful confirmation!

As I was lying there on my back knowing all these things, I also heard a medical practitioner explaining to the gym’s staff that while walking past the entrance of the gym, she heard the call over the intercom and felt it her duty to report. Is the Lord’s timing not wonderful? She then mentioned that when they brought her to me, she could not find any pulse. While I was still listening to this, the paramedics rushed in and carried me out to the ambulance that was already waiting. I am so appreciative and impressed with the quick and professional way in which the staff at the Cape Gate Virgin Active Health Club handled and arranged everything. On arrival at the Kuils River Netcare Hospital, the cardiologist and his assistants were already waiting in the theatre and they immediately performed an angiogram on me. After the initial investigation, the cardiologist informed me that three of my arteries were completely blocked making the insertion of three stents necessary.

However, after the first two were inserted, due to the fact that I was too weak by then, it was decided to rather postpone the insertion of the third stent. Afterwards the cardiologist informed me that I suffered a very serious heart attack which caused much damage to my heart and that I must understand that I am very ill. He was very concerned because after this angiogram, he realised that I was bleeding internally. The next morning I underwent a gastroscopy which showed that, as a consequence of the resuscitation, I had a very large diaphragmatic hernia. However, to their amazement the blood along the full length of the wound clotted. This happened even while I was continually being injected with blood thinning medication since the heart attack! Therefore, in order to prevent the wound from bleeding again, I was not allowed to eat or drink anything for the next two days.

They then took an ECHO of the heart and the cardiologist explained to me that whereas a heart normally has an ejection fraction of 60% of the fresh blood it produces, mine was now only 30%. He informed me that my situation was very serious and told Marina that the chances for my recovery were very slim. Thus she was prepared for the worst.

SECOND EXPERIENCE

The second experience that I had was eight days later when they took me to the theatre (angio catheter suite) for the insertion of the third stent. As I was pushed past one ward I saw a couple in civilian clothes standing between the beds. As the hospital has very strict visiting hours, with visitors permitted strictly between these times, seeing these visitors caught my attention. However, in a following ward, I saw the same couple standing between the beds. I was surprised at the speed and distance this couple could move. As I was looking at them while passing by, both turned their faces and looked at me. Now for those who do not know the fact is that one is not sedated when undergoing an angiogram, but are one hundred percent conscious and able to see, hear and experience everything.

As we moved into the theatre, to my surprise I saw this same couple standing to my right facing each other but with bowed heads. Lying on my back I was looking closely at their faces. I could clearly see that the lips of both were moving as in prayer.

After they laid me on the x-ray bench, I especially looked in the direction where I saw this couple just minutes earlier, but could see no one.

During an angiogram and while lying on the x-ray table, a radiation tube is moved slowly over your face and chest. To your right the cardiologist and his team sit screening your heart and arteries on two big screens situated to your left. You have to turn your head and watch these screens to avoid the radiation tube bumping against your nose. At first they inject a contrast medium into your arteries so that they can see the flow of blood. This is how they assess the stenosis (narrowing) of the coronary vessels. Then they insert the angio catheter into either your wrist or groin and move it through the vessel or artery to the narrowed area. While my cardiologist was busy with this procedure on me and after quite a while, he suddenly asked: "What is going on - what has gone wrong?" The next moment the screens went black and the radiation tube started to swing to and fro over my head totally out of control.

The next moment a lady was holding her hands on both sides of my head asking me if I was with them again. When I confirmed that I was aware of what was happening, she asked me my name and if I was aware of my surroundings. I responded: "I am Naas le Roux and I am lying in the theatre where you are busy crawling along in my arteries." When I said that, she sounded very relieved. When I later asked the cardiologist what happened there, he smiled and said: "O, we just lost you for a few moments." The cardiologist continued with the procedure and inserted the third stent. He then even continued to insert a fourth one that he regarded as critically important, but difficult to do. He managed it all!

After that he sat quietly for a moment and then declared: "We are finished!" At that moment I could not help it. I normally do not exclaim like this in front of strangers or people that I am not aware of as being children of God. However, at that moment I knew with such a certainty that I was in the presence of the Lord and that He had worked something very significant in my body that the words just came pouring from my lips: "Praise the Lord!" Then one of the nurses started to sing a Christian song. It was so good. I could not believe my ears and before I knew what I was doing I encouraged the rest by saying: "Will you not all please join in with her. But please tune it up; do you not know that we are among angels?" When I said that a dead silence fell and one of them asked very surprised: "Did you also see the angels?" When I confirmed that I indeed saw them, she continued: "Do you know how many people see angels here? And you know what, they are not angels that come to take people away. They are angels that are here to assist". And with that, I was wheeled from the theatre.

This incident reminded me of Hebrews 1:14 which says that the angels are ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation.

THE RESULT

The next day they did another ECHO of my heart after which the cardiologist told me that they were very pleased with the recovery of my heart since the second angiogram. He then explained to me how serious my condition was seen to be after the investigation of the first angiogram. He said that the mitral valve, the one that pumps the fresh blood from the heart to the body, simply swung to and fro. As it pumped some blood out, it sucked it back into the heart again. One cannot live like this. However, now the ECHO showed that the valve was working very well. Although there remained a little leak, it was not serious. Many people go through life with bigger leaks. Further good news was that my heart's ejection fraction had improved to 40% which assured that I would be able to continue with life as usual.

After my release from hospital I had to walk for 5 minutes twice daily with an increase of 5 minutes each week. When I went to see the cardiologist for my 6 week follow-up visit, our dog was already taking Marina and me for a 35 minutes' walk twice daily – the same as we were used to doing before the heart attack. I say this despite yet being weak and far from fit. Because of this, the cardiologist has arranged for me to join a recovery program in a gym at the hospital under their supervision.

Good news is that the ECHO done during this follow-up visit shows that my hearts ejection fraction has since improved to 50% of the ideal 60%. Although there is a part of the heart that suffered permanent damage and will, according to them, become scar tissue, we trust the Lord for even further improvement. For all of this wonderful improvement we give the glory to the Lord. His faithfulness, grace and mercy throughout this whole experience were just too amazing.

BETTER THAN BEFORE

When the cardiologist saw the results of these tests, he said that I could now continue with my work as before. I explained to him what we had been doing with the filming in Biblical countries. I described to him how we climbed a peak on Italy's Capri Island during the past September with Dr Randall Smith and some members of the tour group - up to Tiberius' Castle and achieving that with camcorders in hand filming everything. I explained to him that this was comparable to climbing Lion's Head in Cape Town. And also that while filming on tour we were filming site after site and also filming the talks and everything in the bus whilst travelling between each site. Then in the evenings that we had to charge batteries while making backup copies of the day's footage, etc. And that this is what we had to do every night until one or two o'clock in the morning. Back home in SA we would then set ourselves to editing the footage - reckoned to be the fifth most stressful work one can do - and that all of this averaged out at an 14 hour working day, 6 days a week. After informing my specialist of the demands of our work, I asked him if he really meant what he said and that I could continue to do this? He smiled and answered, "Well, if you look at your performance during the 25 minutes Stress-ECG that we had just done, I can't see why not." He then showed me photos of my heart before the stents were inserted and then after and commented: "You are speaking of past September. The fact is that these arteries were narrowed like this for the past three years already. So, if you are going to climb Capri Island again next September, you should find it much easier than last time because your heart is now receiving a constant flow of blood, which was not the case these last few years."

Isn't this very good news? Praise the Lord with us. Although I still have to take time to become fit again, and must be more careful than ever before, the Lord is giving me a chance to complete the work He has purposed for us. Please remember us in your prayers. We need that.

A NEAR-DEATH EXPERIENCE AND ANGELS, CAN IT BE?

I have written the above testimony well aware of the controversial nature thereof. However, it did happen and I am telling it with the hope that it will be an encouragement. One thing that stood out for me is that right through this whole experience, the Lord was in control of every detail. He clearly had a purpose with it all. When I told this story to our general practitioner of the last 15 years, he was very shocked because he could not believe that I had suffered a heart attack. His comment on the goggles that broke was that if that had not happened at that stage, "they would just have found you floating in the pool because you would have swallowed water and drowned." Furthermore, when the cardiologist informed me that I had suffered a heart attack, I told him that I was due to leave for the United States in four days' time. His response was: "It is just as well that it happened now because you would most definitely not have survived the takeoff of the airplane." When the gym called Marina she told them that she could not come because we have only one vehicle and that was now parked at the gym. Our son Filip usually arrived home from work at about 19:00. Just after Marina received the call at about 16:00, Filip walked through the front door. That day his boss had suddenly decided that afternoon that Filip could go home earlier! In so many ways we experienced the Lord's hand throughout this whole process. I also believe that the Lord had a purpose in allowing me to experience these encounters.

Concerning the angels, I have always believed what the Bible teaches us about them and that they are always present with us, working behind the scenes as it were (Ps. 91:10-12, Heb. 1:14). That the Lord can per occasion let one see them is just as Biblical. That I would ever have such an experience never crossed my mind. However, we do not read that those in the Bible who saw them per occasion were seeing them continuously (Acts 5:19-20, 12:5-11). That is normally a onetime experience with a definite purpose.

One person who heard about the experience where I was in a "light cube" asked if it was a near-death experience (NDE). I do not know if it was. The problem with NDEs is that people tend to draw conclusions about what they call "the other side" from testimonies about it. The conclusions of which, I believe, many are incorrect. That people from different religious backgrounds from all over the world have had such experiences is clear from various books and articles. It seems from investigation into many of these testimonies that almost everybody testifies that they wanted to remain there. On account of that some concluded that the Bible was wrong because no one testified about being in hell. They believe that everybody from all religions is going to spend eternity in this very nice place that so many testify about. During my ministry more than one unsaved person told me about their wonderful near-death experience. One later became converted. All of them had one thing in common. That their near-death experience has removed the fear of death and impressed upon them the wonder and expectation of that reality. As Marina and

I have counseled people on this and also read about this phenomenon during our theological training, it is clear to us that none of those who testified about these experiences, went far enough to meet with the Judge, the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore they were unaware of their fate. Somewhere on their way to meet with Him, they regained consciousness. Thus, they did not really die. According to the Bible, those who died and came back were resurrected from the dead. This means that they were not merely collapsing or even declared "clinically" dead, just to regain consciousness a little later. They had really died. None of the people in the Bible who were resurrected from the dead (including the Lord Jesus), are recorded to have told about their experience and how it was in heaven. That does of course not say that those who were resurrected cannot tell what they experienced. I am only saying that it is not recorded in the Bible that for instance Lazarus, who was resurrected by the Lord Jesus, gave such a testimony. If he did, and I cannot see why he would not have done, we have no record of it. Thus, what the Bible reveals about life after death is sufficient; it is all that we need to know.

Now, what then about a testimony like mine above? All I know is that this is what I experienced and it is not exactly the same as the other similar testimonies that I have heard or read about. Although there are similarities, many of those differ from each other. The fact is, I did not die. I was stopped in my tracks on my way there. I was very close to being dead, but before that the Lord sent me back. Thus I cannot tell you anything beyond what I have testified to. Therefore, I would like to urge you to please not conclude anything about "the other side" from my testimony. Please remember that for me it felt like a dream and perhaps it was only that. However, it confirms one thing to me and that is what Hebrews 9:27 says namely that "it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment." It was not my time yet to appear for that judgment. I still have some work to do before I can go.

ONE THING

There remains one thing that I would like to know from you who read this testimony and that is: If you would all of a sudden suffer a heart attack, or die in a motor accident or in any other way, would you be with the Lord Jesus? Do you know without a shadow of a doubt that He would welcome you in heaven? Will you be in His presence? So many people, when one asks them how they know for sure that the Lord will allow them in His heaven, say they know it because they have 'received Him'. That may sound reassuring, but still many doubt if the Lord Himself really has received them. You see, there is a difference between receiving the Lord and knowing that He indeed has received you. There is a sure way to know that you are a child of God. At the end of his first letter John writes that he has written that letter to those "who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life" (1 John 5:13). He is writing this letter to those who already believe in the Lord Jesus, but who may lack what you may be lacking too and that is the sure knowledge that God in His mercy accepted you as His child.

Now, how can one receive this assurance? Well, I think it is obvious: Just read this letter of John while asking the Lord to confirm to you whether you belong to Him. That is why this letter was written. Maybe you will need to read it a few times over and over during the next days. Just keep on asking the Father to confirm through His Word if you are one of His children.

You can also read any other part of the Bible, just as you please. I ask this of you: when you come to the knowledge that the Lord has forgiven your sins and accepted you as one of His children, please drop us a note telling us about it. On the other hand, if there is still doubt in your heart, please do not hesitate to call and either Marina or I will gladly pray with you.

WHY BAD THINGS HAPPEN TO GOOD PEOPLE

Someone that we know suffered a heart attack and was rushed to the same hospital where I was treated. However, he was declared dead on arrival. Why was my life saved and not his? The answer to that question we do not know. Dr Randall Smith touches on this topic in the new DVD, *Trouble On The Sea*, which we released in December just after my heart attack. I just want to mention to you that this particular DVD meant so much to both Marina and me during this time. Marina did the editing thereof and then handed the project to me to do the rounding off. I was supposed to complete it the evening of the day that I suffered the heart attack. As Marina did not yet know how to do the DVD authoring, she would, during her visits to the hospital, take me through what she had worked through and problems she had experienced. In this way I could assist her through the processes, until the DVD was ready to be released. She even brought our laptop to the hospital to show me the end product. Even before this she told me how much the message of this DVD meant to her since the gym called her with the news. I could only confirm to her that Randall's message on this DVD had continuously spoken to my heart since I had regained consciousness. We really needed to do this DVD just before this incident. I hope it is a blessing to you as well.