

Daily View

“But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called ‘today’” Hebrews 3:13

June 4, 2020



Not a very good photo, but this is Lincoln Square, in Gettysburg, PA. Lincoln stayed at the white hotel at the left before delivering the Gettysburg Address.

Falsely Accused

I would never be so insensitive as to say that I know anything about how other people — of any race, color or nationality — feel in difficult situations they face. However, I *can* talk, from experience, about being falsely accused on one occasion.

I have great respect for those in law enforcement. My uncle was a chief of police in southern California; I have friends who worked for the FBI, NCIS, CHP, and many local policemen. But in the late 90s, Christie and I had a run-in with law enforcement that ranks as my number one terrifying moment.

Christie and I decided to visit Washington, D.C. and Civil War sites, including Gettysburg. We chose to fly into Baltimore. When we arrived, we went to baggage claim and were happy to see that both of our bags were the first to come off the rounder. The vacation started off very well.

We pulled our luggage almost the length of the airport to the Hertz car rental stand. When we got there, two men who looked to be in their mid-30's, and very “buffed” as we used to say, flashed their badges, pushed Christie and I apart and began asking us strange questions such as, “*What are you doing here?*” “*Where did you come from?*” “*What do you have in your luggage?*”

I picked up on what was going on immediately; Christie was less shocked and, to the question “what’s in your baggage?” she replied, “oh just some candy.” We had brought some See’s candy to give to a friend. But these were Drug Enforcement Agents (DEA) and “candy” is another name for cocaine.

These agents were deadly serious and I was getting more nervous by the second. I had no idea why they had stopped us and why they were abruptly ripping open our luggage. They seemed especially intrigued with mine, a large black bag that we had purchased just prior to this trip at a JC Penny outlet.

The agents opened each of our bags and started ransacking them looking for drugs as if there was a reward for it. Several people in the auto rental line were watching but that was the least of my concerns. I was afraid that someone had put drugs in our luggage to transport to someone on the east coast.

For about ten minutes, in the mind of the DEA, we were “suspects” in a drug trafficking case. In fact, the agents seemed

so certain that they had caught us redhanded that when they left, the look on their face said “you got away with something; we’ll catch you next time.” There was nothing even remotely like an apology for their abrupt behavior. And our suitcases were totally messed up, although not nearly as badly as I was.

Just before they left, they told us that a drug-sniffing dog had identified our luggage. Clearly, the dog had made a mistake. We continued our trip, although I was looking over my shoulder and watching the rear view mirror more than I normally do.

Being falsely accused is horrible. After I settled my mind a bit, I thought of Jesus who was the ultimate victim of false accusation — and he was totally innocent in all respects (Hebrews 4:15). How terribly frightening it must have been to be set up by false witnesses and framed by the authorities and be subject to the whims and will of the crowd who wanted him to be executed. This was Jesus! “...holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens” Jesus! (Hebrews 7:6). He was taken by lawless hands and murdered because of the false charges leveled against him, with no due process.

To a tiny degree, I know what it feels like to be regarded as a criminal. That experience makes me shiver to this day. It also makes me a bit more sympathetic to those who are singled out for accusation for whatever reason. It’s a genuinely scary experience.

When we got home, I bored quite a few people with this story. But, unfortunately, it became the key feature of an otherwise great trip. One of our members, who was working for the FBI at the time, told us “those drug dogs don’t make mistakes.” That made my head spin.

In an attempt to make light of all of this afterwards, I joked that I cut my pony tail off after that scare (I was joking about the pony tail). But life takes weird turns. We were completely at the mercy of two federal agents who thought they had us. If we had been set up or framed, who knows where we would be today? It’s creepy to think they may have checked us out after that.

I believe I know what actually happened and I’ll share that with you if you’re interested. Suffice to say, the suspicions of the DEA agents were unfounded (in case you were wondering).