

The storyteller traveled widely as I did, and once journeyed to the great city Athens. He was amazed at how the artists there could carve life-like images out of stone¹ [ref Acts 17:28]. He related a story to me that was told to him by a sculptor who worked in the area.

My hands were tired my arms felt heavy, so I stepped back from my work to give it some consideration. My studio was not filled with many other works – I chose to concentrate on one piece of rock at a time. Currently this was a sculpture that I felt was sort of like my life’s work.

Not that my room wasn’t filled all kinds of other products from my creative side. But this sculpture represented a particular part of my soul.

My present work was the second major one of its kind. Its predecessor had been pushed into the back of one of the closets. I had worked on it painstakingly for 20 years or so, and thought that it would endure the test of time. Many hours had been spent on its finely chiseled features, and my hands were constantly sore from polishing its surface smooth. But it had crumbled from within and had been ruined.

The material had not been chosen well. There were internal cracks and fault lines that I did not properly notice when I began. I had a natural faith in the inherent strength of this type of rock and I thought that it could be shaped to meet my needs. But I did not have enough experience in working with this material when I committed to it.

When the sculpture began to deteriorate, I tried every way I could to save it, but to no avail. There was no adhesive that helped because the stone was crumbling from within. After admitting total defeat, I decided that I wasn’t a worthy artist and gave up sculpting for a while.

I assumed that this decision would be final, but I finally found another material that looked very promising. It had the quality of gemstone, and took much less effort to render into the desired shape.

As I worked with this stone, I realized that the beauty of the work (or lack thereof) was not really due to my skill, but the natural qualities of the rock. The beauty of it is not always obvious until the surface has been carefully worked and polished. My new sculpture, with this new material, has an iridescent quality that magnifies its value many-fold.

I am still working this new piece, and it is so much more rewarding than before. The joy of this effort fills all of my work, even that of other areas, and I so grateful that I got a second chance.

The storyteller could see the truth of the parable, and realized that there was a very personal foundation for this story. He knew also that it was a powerful description of how a creative person interpreted his path through a dark valley to emerge into the light.

1. “Therefore since we are God’s offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone — an image made by human design and skill.” Acts 17:28.

Storyteller or Sculptor

Amazement at how artists carved life-like images out of hard rock.

Wood and metals, but marble (stone)?

Paul at Athens – saw many stone sculptures (these would not be common in Israel)

Exodus 20:4-5; Not a rule against carving images, but against creating them for worship and then worshipping them.