



Suicide, Anxiety, & Depression

(The Gospel changes everything)

Part 8

Each week, as we have studied another biblical character, they have all faced experiences that could have been devastating to their lives and faith. Except for Judas Iscariot, the rest maintained their faith in God and came out the other side having learned more about God's faithfulness and the goodness of His character. Tonight, we finish the transition from just discussing issues that affect our minds, hearts, and lives, to how the Gospel changes everything! Outside of Jesus, no New Testament believer physically suffered more for the sake of the Gospel than the Apostle Paul.

2 Corinthians 11:23b-30, *"I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches. Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn? If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness."*

Eventually, Paul was martyred for his faith in Jesus Christ. How could someone who faced all those terrible obstacles hold fast to the faith? Answer: Paul's encounter with the risen, post-ascended Jesus changed his life, his goals, and his mindset forever.

Competing Worldviews: Secular humanism (man-centered theology) vs. God

- We've come a long way from the first **telegraph** (May 24th, 1844-Numbers 23:23b "What hath God wrought!"/"See what God has done!"). Samuel Morse's first message sent from Washington D.C. to Alfred Vail in Baltimore, Maryland, was a nod to the Almighty and an overall sense that discovery was allowed and designed by God.

- Since then, the world has gone through so many changes. Scripture verses are no longer sent to test technology. In fact, our technologically advanced society has all but declared God dead, as some remnant of fairy tales and a bygone, superstitious era.
- **Science** has become the dominant **religion** of the day, with **man** as its **author**, and **technology** as its **fuel**. We worship ourselves at the **altar** of **discovery**.
- We've declared ourselves to be gods and declare that we alone control our own destinies and desires. Whatever we say goes, much like the Israelites in the times of the Judges.
- We've made for ourselves pocket computers called smartphones, which can access the far reaches of the planet and give us unfettered access to information.
- More information is available to us than at any other time in human history, yet we have used our knowledge to puff ourselves up and deny the very existence of God.
- The smartphone has become our **identity**, our **judge**, our source of **pride**, and our source of **shame**. We scroll and swipe our way through people's lives, and it leaves us feeling inadequate and empty.
- I sense that much of what we feel, when it comes to depression, anxiety, fear, anger, loneliness, and suicidal thoughts, stems in some way from what we see on that tiny screen. He/she is smarter, fitter, prettier, shapelier, and happier than I am. They have more, travel more, go more, and do more than I have ever done, or ever will do!
- We feel lonely and held back by our circumstances, so much so that we retreat into **solitude** and become more and more **isolated**. At that point, our minds are ripe for the enemy's attack of temptation, doubt, fear, and even the denial of God.
- When we contrast a man-centric worldview with that of Paul, the two are incompatible.
- Turn to **Galatians 1:13-14** and read Paul's own words about his past life:
 - **MY** former way of **life**...
 - How **intensely** I **persecuted** the Church...
 - I was **advancing**...
 - I was **extremely zealous**...
- Then see **verses 15-17** at Paul's reaction to his calling to follow Christ:
 - God's Sovereign **choice** ("*set me apart from birth*")
 - God's Sovereign **conversion** ("*called me by His grace, was pleased to reveal His Son in me*")
 - God's Sovereign **call** ("*that I might preach Him among the Gentiles*")
- Now, contrast that with **Philippians 3:1-11** and see how Paul came to view his former life and legalistic accomplishments in light of the Gospel. They became **rubbish** to him!
- **Verses 12-16** show how Paul presses on towards the "**prize**," forgetting all else.
- Is your life in agreement with Paul in **2 Corinthians 4:16-18**? Can you see your circumstances as "*light and momentary afflictions*"? Two contrasts; **light** versus **heavy**; "*eternal weight of glory that far outweighs them all.*" And what is **unseen** versus what is **seen**; "*For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.*"

This is how the Gospel changes everything. In this life, we will have troubles, but take heart, Jesus has overcome the world (**John 16:33**). What does that mean? Jesus has ensured, through His substitutionary death, burial, and resurrection, that this life isn't all there will be. In fact, this life and its troubles are momentary in light of an eternity spent with God. A lifetime spent without Christ is truly an empty life that will still be filled with troubles, yet with no hope of a **Rescuer**.



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