

The Struggles and Trauma of the Normal Christian's Life (And How the Gospel Can Take Us To God's Trauma Center)

During my life on planet earth, I have experienced trauma on several occasions, the same way most of you, if not all of you, have. Here's the definition of trauma:

1a: an injury (such as a wound) to living tissue caused by an extrinsic agent, such as an auto accident or a wound in war.

b: a disordered psychic or behavioral state resulting from severe mental or emotional stress or physical injury.

c: an emotional upset

I experienced the trauma of being physically and verbally abused by my father and his apparent hatred of me and my brother. That was traumatic in anyone's book. I experienced the trauma of a concussion when I was just a little boy. I experienced the trauma of being beaten physically by a bully when I was in high school. I experienced the trauma of childish cruelty in school. I experienced trauma in Vietnam. I experienced the trauma of my parents' separation because of my mother's adultery and then her arrest. I experienced the trauma of being born again, born of the Spirit when I was 27. That was both an emotional as well as a spiritual upset. I experienced the trauma of heart surgery and recovery from that surgery. I experienced the trauma of the loss of my dad and my wife. And just recently I experienced the trauma of an auto accident. I'm surprised that any of us human beings can experience any happiness and sanity after what we all experience. I'm not surprised that there is really no definition of "normal." I don't even know what that means.

Now, I know of one traumatic event the entire human race has in common that has disordered our souls and our hearts and our minds, it's called sin. And the trauma of sin happens the moment we are conceived in our mother's womb. That's why babies come out crying and not laughing. David understood the effect his parents' sinfulness had had on him and the trauma of the transference of their sin to him at conception.

⁵ *Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother*

conceived me. (Ps. 51:5 NAU) And Paul the apostle was acutely aware of the trauma of sin.

⁵ For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death. (Rom. 7:5 NAU) Sounds traumatic to me.

⁹ I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, sin became alive and I died; (Rom. 7:9 NAU) ¹⁰ and this commandment, which was to result in life, proved to result in death for me; Sounds traumatic to me.

¹¹ for sin, taking an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me. (Rom. 7:10-11 NAU) That, my beloved, was traumatic.

Before coming to faith in Christ and being born of the Spirit, I existed. That is all; I merely existed. I was not introspective. I did what I did without thinking about why. That was what it was like for yours truly. I hurt, I drank, I smoked weed, I was promiscuous, I had a temper, I was easily offended and intimidated, I had fun, I laughed, I cried, I worked and I reacted to all of that without ever wondering why. The instant I was born of the Spirit while hearing the gospel, I knew nothing about what had just happened to me. I was like Sergeant Shultz on Hogan's Heroes, "I know nothing." But what newborn does?

Now what I **felt** in that moment was amazingly wonderful and powerful and freeing. I was free from a burden I never knew I carried.

Have you ever had something gnawing on your mind and on your conscience that was always there, but you could never put your finger on it? That unknown burden for yours truly was the false guilt and self-loathing my daddy had instilled in my heart as a child. I had lived with that dark cloud over my head without ever thinking about my life in those terms. It was just always there. Many years later while looking back over my life experiences with my then wife, I could see why I had always been somber and melancholic and unhappy. And I could see plain as day why I wept so uncontrollably the day I was saved and for

the first time in my life knew peace. The peace came because my unknown burdens were suddenly and dramatically lifted off my shoulders. I never knew I had such burdens.

Let's begin our study this morning in Paul's letter to the Ephesians, Eph. 2:1-6, and then later we're going to our text in Romans. ^{NAU}

Ephesians 2:1 *And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, ² in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.*

³ *Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. ⁴ **But God**, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵ **even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ** (by grace you have been saved), ⁶ and **raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him** in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, (Eph. 2:1-6 NAU)*

That's the background for every soul born on this planet. We all have this as part of our common testimony. We were all born into spiritual poverty, enslaved by sin and our flesh and the devil, the prince of the power of the air. We were all, without exception, born dead in our trespasses and sins. Not everyone lives the same lifestyle, but we were all equally dead in our trespasses and sins.

From that, I know why I took that first drink when I was 14. I know why I smoked my first cigarette when I was 12. I know why I got drunk so many times during and after high school. I know why I smoked my first joint in the early '70's and then tried harder drugs later. I know why I did one stupid thing after another. I was living in accordance with the will of my god, the devil. And I was at his beck and call. I did not know any of that before God opened my eyes. But that's who I was.

"But God!" God stepped into my life through the gospel and the ministry of the Holy Spirit. And He did not wait until I had gotten my act together to do it. God doesn't go fishing for men hoping they will be cleaned when they come out of the water. He saved me when I was at

the bottom. He saved me when I was as filthy and repulsive as I could have possibly gotten.

⁷ *For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die.*

⁸ ***But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.***

⁹ ***Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. Listen to that, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. Do you see it? “Having now been, we shall be.”***

¹⁰ *For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. (Rom. 5:7-10 NAU) “Having been, we shall be.”*

Childhood trauma and adult trauma always leave scars. The trauma that Jesus experienced left scars on His body to this day. But those trauma scars you and I have in our souls because of our sinfulness will one day be healed and removed as far as the east is from the west.

²⁴ *Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?*

²⁵ ***Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!*** *So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, I myself with my flesh am serving the law of sin.*

And since God has worked in us in such a way,
^{NAU} ***Romans 8:1*** *Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*

² *For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. (Rom. 7:24-8:2 NAU)*

How can this be true, *So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, I myself with my flesh am serving the law of sin,* and at the same time this be true, *Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*

How can it possibly be true that we are still sinful creatures, yet God says to us we will never be condemned? How can it be true that

while God has just proven how sinful we still are yet He says that He will never condemn us? Here's how.

² *For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus **has set you free from the law of sin and of death.*** ³ *For what the Law could not do, the law of Moses, weak as it was through the flesh, because we were all dead in our trespasses and sins and unable to obey the law, **God did:** sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh,*

⁴ *so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.* (Rom. 8:2-4)

Do you see it? Are you with me? Are we on the same page?

There is a law or a principle working in the flesh of every disciple of Christ Paul called the law of sin, 7:25. But there is another law working in the inner man, or the mind, of every disciple of Christ called *the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus*, 8:2. And it is that law that rules and reigns in our lives now. And that is what God says. I'm going to go with what God says.

Beloved, we will always carry around in our corrupt physical bodies the traumas we have experienced, just as we will always sin until the day we leave these bodies. But do not allow your remaining sinfulness to deceive you into believing the lies it will try to sell you. God has the final say in our lives and He says that we are His and we now have eternal life in and through faith in His Son.