

Delivered From Suicide

Testimony by Pastor Paul Lyon

“Why am I alive?” I asked my father as a 16-year old junior in high school. Little did I know that this question would be the beginning of 10 long years of struggling with thoughts of suicide. It was at that moment that I had first contemplated killing myself. Alone, in my room, I put the tip of a very large hunting knife against my chest, pointed it at my heart and thought, “Why not?”. To live my life the way my father had described it and wind up like him with a good career, making good money and ‘shackled’ with a wife and kids, left me empty inside. That emptiness hurt. I felt the prick of the knife point, and remembered that there were some people outside of my home that might miss me, and I might miss them, so I put down the knife. The hurt seemed to subside a little bit, but the emptiness remained.

I graduated from high school, and went on to college right away. I stayed there for a year before flunking out. I had spent most of my time drinking until I would throw up and I would smoke just about anything. Over the next ten years I managed to join the Navy, work on submarines, and eventually got the Navy to send me back to college. I was in my last semester of studies for a B.S. in Aerospace Engineering in Austin, Texas, when the old emptiness and hurt began to fester again. I felt loneliness, as if a pillow had been placed over my face and I was suffocating. The loneliness did not cause me physical pain, but I felt myself collapsing inside leaving me with an urgent desire to get away. This hurting emptiness caused me to again put something against my body with the intent of using it to stop the emotional pain. This time it was a .357 magnum pistol and it was pointed at my forehead with my thumb on the trigger.

Tonight, I had decided, I was going to make that emptiness go away. But as I held the gun up to my head, I started to cry. You see, my parents had taken me to church when I was younger and I had learned that there was a God. So as I began to cry, I managed to say “God, if you’re real, please help me.”. My strength to hold up the gun began to fade and I had to put it down. I cried myself to sleep that night in the painful, empty darkness.

Well, God had heard my cry for help that lonely night and as I prepared for classes the next morning, it just so happened that I glanced at the University newspaper. What caught my attention was a cartoon that had a punch line of a thirteen-year-old girl standing in the sunroof of a Volkswagen saying “I’ve got to assert my sexual identity sometime!”. Something about the cartoon struck me as being sick and while contemplating this cartoon, my friend Bob showed up. I knew Bob went to church somewhere, so I decided to ask him to lunch so I could ask him what he thought about this sick cartoon. As he talked, I began to feel something inside of me that I had never felt before. I told Bob that I felt this “something” as he was talking and that I wanted to go to a service at his church. We arranged to meet there the following night.

When the service started they were noisy. They sang loud. They raised their hands when they prayed, and they all prayed at the same time! They seemed to really be enjoying themselves. Everything they did seemed to be sincere.

God talked to me through His word (the Bible) that day. I saw things that I had never been taught in catechism. The most significant thing I saw, was that I needed to be ‘born again’. I never even noticed, that as I was reading the Bible, all thoughts of suicide had left my mind! I was focusing on the knowledge that God wanted a personal relationship with me, He made me, and He wanted to save me from “sin”. I found out that God was the only one who could provide me with the meaning of life.

The Bible told me I could ask God to forgive me of all my sins and that He would forgive me. On a Saturday night in February of 1979, I did just that. For about two to three hours, all I could do was cry and ask God to forgive me. I cried and cried and cried. For the first time in my life I really felt like God was sincerely listening to me. It felt so good.

The next day was a Sunday and I did what the Bible said that I had the privilege to do. I got baptized in the name of Jesus for the remission (washing away) of all of my sins. After I repented and got baptized, in addition to my having been delivered from suicide, God also took away my addiction to alcohol and cigarettes. Three weeks later, God filled me with His Spirit and I spoke in a language I had never learned, just like the Bible said I would.

God showed me how to be 'born again' and gave me a promise that He would never leave me. Since that time I have lived a life free from suicidal thoughts because Jesus has never left me. Now, whenever times get tough or depression tries to throw a 'suffocating pillow' over my face, I can read God's Word, feel the tug of His Spirit in my soul and receive encouragement to run in this race called life. Now I know who I am, where I came from, why I'm here, and where I am going in life. Now I too can be like the preacher that first brought me all the counsel of God and be God's 'mailman' to others.

- Paul Lyon