

Perilous Paul

A long, narrow, ancient stone road with a wooden plank path in the center, leading through a hilly, vegetated landscape under a cloudy sky. The road is composed of large, irregular stone blocks, and the central path is made of weathered wooden planks. The surrounding terrain is hilly and covered in green vegetation, with some stone structures visible on the left side.

by Robert Prins

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He had everything to live for. Born into a prestigious family with privileges both nationally and internationally, an academically excellent school life, he rose in rank and honour faster than all his colleagues. While still a young man, he became a leader in his field. He ticked all the boxes. He had done it all. The world was opening up to their new commander. Extremely zealous, he could do nothing wrong.

Suddenly he changed. No less of a man than what he had previously been, he turned away from it all. Were there bigger and better opportunities? No. Was the pay better? No. Would he find a better work-life balance? No. Far from it.

From a man who had everything – the money, friends, power, comfort, prestige and fame to spend in an honourable and fear-free life, he gave it away. This is what he chose instead:

“In labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned;

three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.” (2 Corinthians 11 v 23 – 28 NKJV).

Paul did not begin his life as a Christian. Instead, he persecuted Christians, put them in prison, and even watched them being killed because they were Christians. He was good at dishing out punishment. Then Paul had a Damascus Road experience when he met Jesus Christ. It changed his life. His sins were forgiven. Freed from guilt. In Christ, he gained peace, hope for the future, and the promise of resurrection and everlasting life. Paul went from the prestigious life of a persecutor to the life of a man on the run. Persecuted. The change was his choice.

Why would he choose to be persecuted rather than to be the persecutor? This was his reason:

“But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.” (Philippians 3 v 7 – 11 NIV).

Paul, one of the most intelligent and promising people who ever lived, turned his life around because of Jesus. The life he once had and the perils he went through as a Christian were nothing compared to the glory of knowing Jesus Christ and having the hope of the resurrection.

His decision and his future could also be yours.

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This is one of the most epic adventures of all time. He had everything going for him, and then he gave it all up. For what?

Beatings, shipwrecks, persecution...

Why would he choose a life of peril when he could have had a life of ease?

There was one good reason.

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