

Veteran PTSD, Moral Injury, and the Church's Forgotten Vocation

A combat veteran's account of why secular trauma protocols cannot complete what only covenant community and theological imagination can finish.

Dr. J Rodriguez, Founder, Troika Ministries — Navy veteran, USS South Carolina (CGN-37), Desert Shield/Desert Storm ·
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"Dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' Then he fell on his knees and cried out, 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them.' When he had said this, he fell asleep." (Acts 7:58–60, NIV84)

"And when the blood of your martyr Stephen was shed, I stood there giving my approval and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him." (Acts 22:20, NIV84)

"As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?'" (Acts 9:3-4, NIV84)

"Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything." (Acts 9:8-9, NIV84)

"Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, 'Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.' Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, and after taking some food, he regained his strength. Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus." (Acts 9:17-19, NIV84)

"We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about the hardships we suffered in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life. Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us." (2 Corinthians 1:8–10, NIV84)

"Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in

persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong." (2 Corinthians 12:8–10, NIV84)

Scripture Reference List

- Acts 7:58-60 — the stoning of Stephen, witnessed and consented to by Saul
- Acts 9:1-4 — the Damascus road; "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?"
- Acts 9:8-9 — three days blind, unable to eat, led by the hand
- Acts 9:17-19 — Ananias: "Brother Saul," restored sight, baptism, food, strength
- Acts 22:19-20 — Paul recalls, decades later, holding the cloaks at Stephen's death
- Acts 14:19-20 (see also Paper 1, §III) — stoned at Lystra, left for dead
- 2 Corinthians 1:8-10 — "burdened... beyond our strength... despair even of living"
- 2 Corinthians 4:7-12 — "afflicted in every way, but not crushed... death at work in us, but life in you"
- 2 Corinthians 12:7-10 — the thorn, the threefold plea, "my grace is sufficient... power is perfected in weakness"
- Romans 5:3-4 — affliction produces endurance, endurance produces proven character, character produces hope
- 1 Thessalonians 5:11 — "encourage one another and build up each other"
- Luke 1:17 — preparing a people for the Lord (the Original Intent vocation this paper protects)

All Scripture quoted from the New International Version, 1984 edition (NIV84), per Troika Ministries' translation standard settled 2026-07-08. Converted from the original Lexham English Bible (LEB) citations, 2026-07-09.

A Note on Sources

This paper draws on trauma-informed scholarship examining Paul's biography (including the application of Dave Grossman's research on the psychological cost of killing/witnessing killing, and Kenneth Berding's diagnostic-criteria approach to the "thorn in the flesh") supplied by Dr. J for this paper. That scholarship is treated here as **serious interpretive possibility, not settled biographical fact** — Scripture does not clinically diagnose Paul, and this paper does not claim to either. What is not speculative is Paul's own testimony, quoted directly above: the sleeplessness, the despair of life, the retained memory, the unremoved thorn, and God's answer of sufficient grace. The interpretive layer explains *why* that testimony reads as trauma-congruent to a modern ear; it does not supply facts Scripture itself withholds.

Canon Alignment

Existing canon

The Epidemic (Series Preface)

Original Intent Narrative

Veteran PTSD Ministry canon

The 4th Day Reset (Paper 4)

Neurobiology and Biblical Integration canon

Crisis Safety Flow

How this paper reinforces it

Direct answer to Symptom 03 — names combat veterans specifically as the wounded the epidemic leaves behind

§II — veterans are not outside the vocation of "preparing a people," they are among those it was for

§V affirms the existing PTSD-vs-moral-injury distinction (amygdala/fear vs. anterior insula/shame) with Paul as the scriptural case

§VII names the same pattern: grace that does not remove the wound but transforms its meaning; resurrection, not resuscitation

§VIII cites Regulate → Relate → Reveal → Reform as the required sequence before formation can be received

§VIII restates the mandatory, non-negotiable crisis-routing protocol

Canonization Record

- **Originated by:** Dr. J (Jose G. Rodriguez, Ph.D.), Navy veteran, drawing on both personal service history and trauma-informed research on the Apostle Paul supplied for this paper
- **Drafted by:** Shepherd (AI), at Dr. J's direction, using Dr. J's quoted thesis, supplied research, and Troika canon as source material, with Scripture retrieved live from Dr. J's Logos library
- **Status:** Awaiting Dr. J's review for voice and doctrinal precision — this topic in particular should be reviewed against Dr. J's own service experience before being finalized
- **Review:** Dr. J retains sole authority to amend, publish, or withhold this paper

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