

"Paul's Defense of his Apostleship"

Part 6

2 Corinthians 11

Introduction: Last week in our study we looked at Paul's boasting as a defense of his apostleship. When Paul boast he did not boast of his spiritual gifts, he did not boast of how many people he had led to Jesus Christ, he did not boast of how many churches he started, nor did he boast of the ministries he was involved in. But instead Paul boasted of his sufferings.

Notice 2 Corinthians 11:23-33

Paul boasted of his sufferings for two reasons:

1. **The sufferings he endured for the cause of Jesus Christ was something the false apostles would never endure.**

The false apostles were not interested in suffering for the Gospel they were only concerned for personal gain. They had come to Corinth and had become a financial burden to the church.

Paul was all about gain but not material gain. He was interested in spiritual gain.

Philippians 3:8-10

⁸ *Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, **that I may win Christ,***

⁹ *And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:*

¹⁰ *That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and **the fellowship of his sufferings,** being made conformable unto his death;*

Paul desired to know more of Jesus Christ. The material things of this world meant nothing to Paul. He desired to become more and more like his Savior and for others to see the righteousness of God in his life. This was something the false apostles knew nothing about. They were all about gaining the world but Paul was all about gaining Christ and he saw his suffering as a means to a deeper fellowship with Jesus Christ.

2. The suffering was evidence of his apostleship for it was the fulfillment of Jesus Words concerning the apostles.

Let me remind you what Jesus said in the Gospel of John.

John 15:18-21

¹⁸ If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.

¹⁹ If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

²⁰ Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.

²¹ But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me.

Then there are the Words the Lord spoke concerning Paul's ministry.

Acts 9:13-16

¹³ Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem:

¹⁴ And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name.

¹⁵ But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:

¹⁶ For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.

This is what we looked at last week. Tonight, I want to walk you through the suffering of the apostle Paul.

I. **The Sufferings of Paul**

1. He labored

Notice 2 Corinthians 11:23

"in labours more abundant"

Let me show you what Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15.

1 Corinthians 15:9-10

⁹ *For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.*

¹⁰ *But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but **I laboured more abundantly than they all:** yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.*

The false apostles saw the office of an apostle as a privilege. In other words, they saw the office of an apostle as a position where you were to be served. They saw it as a position that elevated a man over those around him. Paul did not see his office as a position to use to lord over other people. He saw the office of an apostle as an opportunity to labor and serve others. Paul had the mind of Christ and it was his desire to live in a way that other could see Christ in him.

Galatians 2:20

²⁰ *I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*

Notice the words of Jesus in Matthew.

Matthew 20:26-28

²⁶ *But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, **let him be your minister:***

²⁷ ***And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant:***

²⁸ *Even as the Son of man came **not to be ministered unto, but to minister,** and to give his life a ransom for many.*

Paul labors covered many areas of his ministry. He labored to reach others with the Gospel. He labored in the Word. He labored in prayer. He labored to earn a living. All of Paul's labors were a labor of love. It was all for the Gospel, for the Word and for the souls who needed Christ.

2. Paul was beaten.

"in stripes above measure"

Paul had been whipped and beaten so many times that he had lost count, that is what "above measure" means. His flesh was as our own flesh. His flesh would bleed and tear under the lashes. I can just imagine that every time he was sentenced to another beating that inside he would cringed. He knew the pain. He knew how long it would take for the wounds to heal. He knew the familiar bite of the whip. He knew how long the soreness would last. But the beatings never deterred him. His life was not about him it was about Christ and the beatings he received only drove him closer to Jesus Christ. His longing to know more of Christ would be fulfilled as he learned the fellowship of His sufferings. Let me show you how Paul handled the beatings.

Acts 16:22-34

²² And the multitude rose up together against them: and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat them.

²³ And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely:

²⁴ Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks.

²⁵ And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.

²⁶ And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed.

²⁷ And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled.

²⁸ But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here.

²⁹ Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas,

³⁰ And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?

³¹ And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.

³² And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house.

³³ *And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway.*

³⁴ *And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.*

3. **Paul was imprisoned.**

"in prisons more frequent"

In the book of Acts, we are only told of one of Paul's imprisonments but here he reminds the Corinthians he was in prison frequently. The Roman prisons were dungeons in Paul's day. There were several degrees of imprisonment. The most severe was when the prisoner was locked in stocks and often placed in torturous positions. The mildest degree was to be chained to a military soldier 24 hours a day. This was known as "Military Custody". Under this sentence the prisoner was often permitted to live within a house. Paul experienced all degrees of imprisonment and because the Gospel offended so many people it happened very often. But the prisons would not deter the apostle. Remember his response when he was imprisoned in Rome.

Philippians 1:12-14, 20-21

¹² *But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel;*

¹³ *So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places;*

¹⁴ *And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.*

²⁰ *According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death.*

²¹ *For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*

4. **Paul was in life threatening situations many times.**

"in deaths oft"

On such occasion is recorded in Acts 14.

Acts 14:9

⁹ *And there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead.*

Paul came very close to death many times through the beatings and the stoning recorded here in Acts. Let me show you what he recorded.

1 Corinthians 15:30-31

³⁰ *And why stand we in jeopardy every hour?*

³¹ *I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily.*

I used to think that when Paul said he died daily that he meant he died to self every day. He did die to self every day but I believe the statement here in 1 Corinthians refers to the suffering he faced and the JEOPARDY EVERY HOUR. In that suffering I believe Paul would live his own death every day in his own mind. This reminds me of a statement made by David as he fled from Saul.

1 Samuel 20:3

³ *And David sware moreover, and said, Thy father certainly knoweth that I have found grace in thine eyes; and he saith, Let not Jonathan know this, lest he be grieved: but truly as the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, there is but a step between me and death.*

Paul faced such danger that in his mind he knew that he could die any day. In his mind he lived his death every day.

5. Paul was beaten by the Jews 5 times and each time he received 39 lashes.

Deuteronomy 25:1-3a

If there be a controversy between men, and they come unto judgment, that the judges may judge them; then they shall justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked.

² *And it shall be, if the wicked man be worthy to be beaten, that the judge shall cause him to lie down, and to be beaten before his face, according to his fault, by a certain number.*

³ *Forty stripes he may give him, and not exceed:*

The Jews elected to only give 39 lashes so as not to exceed the 40.

An ancient Jewish writing describes the procedure for receiving stripes in a Jewish court: "The two hands of the criminal are bound to a post, and then the servant of the synagogue either pulls or tears off his clothes till he leaves his breast and shoulders bare. A stone or block is placed behind him on which the servant stands; he holds in his hands a scourge made of leather, divided into four tails. He who scourges

lays one third on the criminal's breast, another third on his right shoulder, and another on his left. The man who receives the punishment is neither sitting nor standing, but all the while stooping; and the man smites with all his strength, with one hand."

Conclusion:

What was it that motivated Paul in the midst of this suffering to press on for Jesus Christ? We can find the answer in Romans 8.

Romans 8:33-39

³³ *Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth.*

³⁴ *Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.*

³⁵ *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?*

³⁶ *As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.*

³⁷ *Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.*

³⁸ *For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,*

³⁹ *Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

It was the love of God that motivated Paul and allowed him to continue to serve in the face of the suffering.

2 Corinthians 5:14

¹⁴ **For the love of Christ constraineth us:** *because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead:*

Paul never once questioned the love of God in the suffering he endured.

Luke 6:26

²⁶ *Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets.*