

"Paul's Defense of his Apostleship"

Part 7

2 Corinthians 11

Introduction: In our study of 2 Corinthians we have been looking at the sufferings of Paul as he recorded them in chapter 11. This was all recorded in response to the boasting of the false apostles who were claiming that Paul was not a true apostle. It appears the false apostles only had forged letters of commendation saying they were super apostles. They attacked Paul to discredit his teachings because they were instruments of Satan who were being used to cast doubt upon the Word of God.

Therefore, because the credibility of the Word was at stake in Corinth Paul was forced to boast to give evidence of his apostleship. Paul had no hand-written letters but he did have Spirit written letters.

2 Corinthians 3:1-3

Do we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you?

² **Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men:**

³ *Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be **the epistle of Christ** ministered by us, written not with ink, but **with the Spirit of the living God**; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.*

The message which Paul preached which was the Gospel of Grace was hated by the world of his day. It is also hated today and therefore when we as believers stand True to the Gospel we can be sure there is going to be resistance. Before we continue I want to raise a question and then answer the question, "Why is the Gospel met with such violent hatred?" I believe there are 3 reasons for this hatred:

1. **The Gospel reveals the sinfulness of man.**

When people are confronted with their sins they will often choose to fight against the convictions. Man likes to think that he is a "good" person. The Gospel means that man is guilty and this is something that is difficult for many to accept.

2. **The Gospel reveals the helplessness of man.**

This is a full attack against the pride of man because man wants to do something which gives him the glory.

3. **The Gospel reveals there is only One way to God.**

This completely destroys man's different ways which he has formulated to get himself to heaven. To be saved man must abandon all other paths and then enter through the strait/narrow gate which is through Jesus Christ.

These 3 Truths cut man to the heart.

Acts 5:29-33

²⁹ Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.

³⁰ The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree.

³¹ Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.

³² And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.

³³ When they heard that, they were cut to the heart, and took counsel to slay them.

Remember the response to Steven's sermon in Acts 7?

Acts 7:51-54

⁵¹ Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye.

⁵² Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers:

⁵³ Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it.

⁵⁴ When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth.

These two accounts in Acts were the results of man's hatred for the Gospel.

As we looked at last week Paul also suffered at the hands of man but he also suffered because of his own choice to carry the Gospel to as many people as he possibly could. Paul fully understood what he had been saved from and he understood that he did not deserve salvation. If God could save him then he knew salvation was available for everyone who would accept Jesus Christ. Therefore, he committed his life to sharing the Gospel and what he endured proved he was a true apostle. Let us now get back to Paul's sufferings in chapter 11.

I. **The Sufferings of Paul**

Part 2

1. **Paul labored**

Notice 2 Corinthians 11:23

"in labours more abundant"

2. **Paul was beaten.**

"in stripes above measure"

3. **Paul was imprisoned.**

"in prisons more frequent"

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

"in deaths oft"

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

This now brings us to where we are in our study tonight.

Notice 2 Corinthians 11:25

6. **Paul was beaten with rods.**

Last week we looked at how Paul had been beaten by the Jews 5 times and each time he was given 39 lashes. There is something I had forgot to mention last week that will shine more light upon man's hatred of the Gospel.

Forty lashes were the maximum which a man could be given but if the crime was less "criminal" then the lashes could be reduced. The fact that Paul received the maximum each time tells us how much he and his message were hated.

Here in the verse before us before us we are told that Paul was beaten with rods 3 times. This would have been the beating given by the Gentiles. I am reminded that in verse 23 Paul recorded that he had lost count of the beatings which he had received. But the beatings given by the Jews and the beatings listed here by the Gentile with rods were beatings which he would never forget. The reason was because they were very severe and it took much time to heal from the wounds and the pain.

The Jews used a scourge and they were limited in how many lashes they could administer but the Romans had no limits. Many men died at the hands of the Roman Lictor. One of these beatings is recorded in Acts. We looked at it last week but let me point out a few more things concerning this beating.

Acts 16:20-23

²⁰ And brought them to the magistrates, saying, These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city,

²¹ And teach customs, which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans.

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:

This beating was delivered by the Romans and they did not give 39 stripes but we are told they gave MANY stripes. There was no limit. The Lictor was trained in a way that he knew how to inflict the greatest pain and he would administer the painful rod as many times as he was instructed.

7. Paul was stoned.

"once was I stoned"

This stoning took place in Lystra.

Acts 14:19

¹⁹ 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.

When Paul came into Lystra on his first missionary journey he healed a well know crippled man and was then seen as a hero. The people of the town wanted to worship Paul and Barnabas but they stopped the people from doing so. It was then that the group of Jews

came from Antioch came to Lystra and turned the entire mood of the city around. They then took Paul and they stoned him. This stoning was so severe that they believed he was dead. The phrase "supposing he had been dead" means they were convinced he was dead. When a person was stoned they were pummeled with baseball size stones aimed at the head and then there were often larger stones thrown upon the exhausted person's chest to stop the heart.

We can only imagine the scars which Paul carried from this stoning as well as the beatings.

8. Paul was ship wrecked three times.

"thrice I suffered shipwreck"

Many believe that Paul traveled some 6,770 miles by ship in his journeys. The three ship wrecks mentioned here do not include the ship wreck on the way to Rome mentioned in Acts. That happened after these three ship wrecks. To suffer ship wreck would mean to face a storm on the ocean that was so severe it either beat the ship to pieces or it drove the ship into the rocks. These storms often happened in the cold of the winter which means Paul was forced to jump into the icy seas multiple times and then cling to anything available to make his way to shore.

9. Paul spent a night and a day in the deep.

"a night and a day I have been in the deep"

This was the result of a ship wreck. Paul spent one day and one-night floating on a piece of drift wood until he was either rescued or drifted into the shore.

This was all for the cause of Jesus Christ and spreading the Gospel.

10. Paul was in journeyings and perils often.

"In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren;"

The word "peril" here means DANGERS. Paul was in very dangerous situations very often. We are not going to consider each one of these but there is something here that will shine some light upon what Paul is speaking of here.

I want to focus upon perils in the city. I want you to notice the words of Phillips on the cities of Paul's day:

"A Romans city was home to countless pagan cults and creeds and the temples of the gods were the home of every kind of vice. In Roman cities vast wealth and privilege dwelt side

by side with destitution. The rich and powerful oppressed the poor and the weak. Roman justice was harsh, often corrupt, frequently cruel. Torture was a legitimate way to extort information.

Hospitals and public schools were unknown. Rome had made many orphans but its cities had no orphanages. There were no asylums, no charities, no humane societies, no unions. The old, the sick, the deformed, the mentally ill, the insane, the blind were left to fend for themselves. Disease reigned unconquered and epidemics were common enough.

Taxation robbed everyone, particularly the weak. Taxes were collected by unscrupulous men who made great demands and grew rich as their victims grew poor. Roman law was administered with a heavy hand. At the slightest breath of organized protests, the Roman army was called in.

The slums where so many lived, were haunts of misery and crime. Murders were commonplace. Rome's idea of a holiday was a day at the circus, where gladiators fought to the death and where prisoners, criminals, and undesirables were fed to the wild beasts. The emperors themselves were monsters of depravity, degenerate and demented tyrants, mad and drunk with power.

"In perils in the city," said Paul. Dangerous places at the best of times, the cities Paul knew were ten times more dangerous for a preacher like him - who came to publicly proclaim a greater king than Caesar and a greater realm than Rome's. When Paul entered the gate of a city he never knew if he would leave it alive. At Athens, he was mocked. At Jerusalem, he was mobbed. At Rome, he was martyred. "I have fought with beasts at Ephesus" he once told the Corinthians. Stoned at Lystra! Mauled in Jerusalem! Flogged at Philippi! Chained at Caesarea! And we only know part of it."

Let me go back to Paul's statement that he was in "journeyings often". Travel in Paul's days was extremely difficult and dangerous. Let me remind all of us of the story which Luke recorded.

Luke 10:30-34

³⁰ *And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.*

³¹ *And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.*

³² *And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side.*

³³ *But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him,*

³⁴ *And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.*

There were robbers and thieves around every corner.

Notice 2 Corinthians 11:26 again.

He faced the dangers of the robbers, dangers while in the wilderness, and dangers by the heathen. These all came in his travels. Paul never knew at the beginning of the day if he would be alive at the end of the day.

11. **Paul grew weary.**

Notice 2 Corinthians 11:27

Paul was human and therefore he knew what it was to be weary and exhausted from traveling and preaching. The watchings were times when he could not sleep because he had to be on constant alert because of dangers. There were times he had no food or no water. There were times when he was cold and lack sufficient clothing for the weather conditions which he faced.

Conclusion:

There are several applications which come to my mind when I look at the sufferings of Paul.

1. I am thankful for the Nation which I live in and the freedoms and the protection given to us.
2. At the Judgment Seat of Christ, we will be held accountable for the freedoms and the privileges and the protection given to us here in this country. There will be no acceptable excuses on that day as to why we did serve Jesus Christ. Can you imagine standing beside of Paul and trying to explain that why we did not step through the door of opportunity when God opened it? Today people may say, "It is too cold, it is too hot, it is too far, I am too busy, it is too costly, it is too demanding, I am too tired and so on..."