Struck down but not Destroyed!

I. Slide#1 Announce:
   A. Peru Team: leave Fri. [VBS Mon-Thurs; day river trip on Friday]
      1. Liz Zarate, dad's surgery on leg, tomorrow at 1pm.
   B. Pray for Ukraine Team: winter camp starts tomorrow (80 youths, ages 13-18) [Z&C, Amanda Wells]
      1. Amer team will lead 3 daily 1 hour classes: chemistry, guitar, crafting.

II. Intro:
   A. What were the Lord's 1st words to Paul after his conversion?
      1. Slide#2 Acts 9:15,16 Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him (the great things he’ll do in my name? No! ; The success he’ll have as a missionary? No! ; How many people he’ll lead to Christ? No! ; How famous & popular he’ll become? No!)
      Slide#3 how many things he must suffer for My name's sake.
   B. I’ve broken this down into 6 categories Paul’s speaks to.
      1. There are actually 23 things in Paul’s list he points out to us.
   C. Slide#4 Paul now finishes his argument to the Corinth church, against the “super-apostles”, by sharing one more of his credentials….the wounds in his body!
      1. Gal.6:17 I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.
      2. Paul uses his sufferings as the best proof for asserting his apostleship.
      3. Better a “heart of sincere devotion & sacrificial service” then your “impressive credentials”!
      4. “When selecting a spiritual leader,…look for scars.” (www)

III. Slide#5 MY HERITAGE! (22)
   A. A 3-fold description of a “full-blooded Jew”!
      1. Hebrew (only 2 other x’s used in NT was a Linguistic Distinction) [i.e. Not only could speak Greek but was a Semitic speaker also]
      2. Israelite (Nationality)
      3. Seed of Abraham (Paul traced his lineage back to tribe of Benjamin, Phil.3:5)
         a) They didn’t have claim to superiority in any of these 3 categories!

IV. Slide#6 MY SUFFERING! (23-25)
   A. We sure learn how much we don’t know about Paul!
B. He wrote this letter when he was in Ephesus, thus we are only as far along as Acts 19 (his story line is in Acts 13-28).
   1. Thus this only *skims the surface* of what Paul did & endured.

C. *Scar by scar* Paul shows the Corinthians his battle wounds.
   1. I picture him rolling up his tunic; opening up his robe!
      a) Just as you have a story for every scar on your body!

D. (24) 5 times 40 stripes minus 1 (195 lashes) – A Jewish punishment.
   1. Deut.25:3 Forty blows he may give him and no more.
   2. Details are in the Jewish *Mishnah* (book where the Jewish traditional law was codified)

E. (25) Beaten w/rods – A Roman punishment.
   1. “The attendants of the magistrates were called lectors & they were equipped w/rods of *birch wood* w/which the guilty criminal was chastised.”
      a) Caning is still used today in different countries for corporal punishment.

V. Slide#7 MY TRAVELS! (26)

A. Again & again Paul speaks of the dangers of travels.
   1. Our dangers of travel today? - No leg room on our jumbo jets. Possible restless leg syndrome. In flight meal might not be like a home cooked meal. Possibility of your plane ride to be a little bit bumpy!
      a) Actually, we have many countries that are *dangerous to travel* to, let alone to share our faith in, let alone to go live as missionaries there.

B. Ancient people did not relish the sea:
   1. Seneca, a contemporary of Paul said, “You can persuade me into almost anything now for I was recently persuaded to travel by sea.”

C. Often on the roads a traveler was caught & held for ransom.

D. As one said, “Paul’s path was uphill, with sharp stones, paved with wild beasts. His way was the way of the cross. Jesus walked it before him. And many saints have marched it since!”

VI. Slide#8 MY INTERNAL STRUGGLES! (27,28)

A. Paul went anywhere, endured anything, that he might take the gospel to lost souls.
   1. Why is it we have the tools to make things *easier & faster* today, & yet are getting *less done*?

B. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches. (NIV)
   1. Helping the new Christians, discipleship, counseling problem issues, & warding off the devil’s attacks, are demanding tasks!

1 William Barclay, pg.253.
2. Paul bore the sorrows & the troubles of his people on his heart! (Ex: Sat night couldn’t sleep)
3. Is this how you view the Lord’s church? With deep concern? Do you ask, what can you get from the church, or what can you give?

VII. Slide#9 **MY WEAKNESS!** (29-31)
A. Vss.28,29 in the NLT helps to interpret this, Then, besides all this, I have the daily burden of my concern for all the churches. Who is weak without my feeling that weakness? Who is led astray, and I do not burn with anger?
B. (30) While these false apostles boast of their strengths, Paul instead speaks to his weaknesses!
C. Paul here is leading up to his thorn in the flesh. (next chapter)

VIII. Slide#10 **MY BASKET CASE!** (32,33)
A. Interesting he chooses the basket incident to end with. It seems anti-climatic!
   1. Acts 9:25 Then the disciples took him by night and let him down through the wall in a large basket.
   2. The wall in Damascus was wide enough to drive a carriage along it. Many of the houses overhung the wall & he was probably let down from one of them.
B. An inglorious escape to keep him humble.
   1. How humiliating for this great “rabbi” to have to be lowered out of the city in a basket used normally for hay, straw, or wool!
      a) No limo, no Suburban w/smoked windows, no VIP treatment here!
C. Also, this was probably worse than any scourging for Paul, not to be able to face his enemies, but instead have to flee like a fugitive!
D. Note: Paul never denied the pain & pressures of life.
   Never suggested that following Christ was problem-free.
   Never tries to analyze or moralize why he had to suffer them.
E. Note also: Paul doesn’t share this from a victim mentality; but instead let’s us hear about his solidly placed anchors that he has dropped along the way, on his voyage w/Christ!

IX. Slide#11 **TODAY!**
A. Did you know? More people were tortured for their faith in Jesus Christ in the 20th century than in all the previous 19 combined!
B. Did you know? 100 million people were martyred for their faith in the 20th century.
   1. More people died in circumstances related to their faith in the past century than in all the 20th century wars combined.
C. **Did you know?** Reported incidences of persecution have actually *increased* since the fall of communism.

1. Today, an estimated **200 million Christians** are facing persecution around the world.
2. **Slide#12** In at least **60 countries** they are denied fundamental human rights solely because of their faith.

D. **Slide#13 Show Video**

E. What’s it like to be imprisoned for your faith? What do you go through?

F. Here’s a 1st hand account from a man in a Roman jail, because of his faith. Paul. 2 Tim.1:15-18

G. **Slide#14 (15)** All those in Asia have turned away from me.

1. Even the strongest believers need *encouragement* when they suffer.
2. Here the *loneliness* & *pain* he feels.

H. **(16)** Here the incredible *Joy* in the next verse.

1. One man didn’t forget him (Onesiphorus).
   a) It is no difference today. Suffering Christians need to know we are praying for them & care for them. [also the families of those imprisoned]

I. It might take some *serious searching* to find them…it did Onesiphorus! (see vs.17)

J. **Slide#15blank Ending Prayer:** Boldness to stand firm; God’s protection; Grace to forgive their oppressors; deliverance of their nations from spiritual bondage; God would open doors for bible translation, distribution, Christian Materials, & evangelism; Lifting of legal & social restrictions against Christians; raise up church leaders w/spiritual & moral integrity; & Unity in the church & warm fellowship amongst the believers.

K. **Ending Song:** *We are going to do something very different!*

1. Most underground churches *meet secretly* & have to *sing in hush tones*.
2. Also, to avoid detection they usually meet in *dimly lit places*.
3. Let’s do that as a reminder this evening of our Christian brothers & sisters throughout the world who must *meet in secret*.
   a) We’re going to *bring ALL the lights down*; and we are going to *quietly sing*. 