

2 Corinthians 11:22-33

1-2-13

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.”¹
 - 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 devils 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.**