

“Suffering For Christ”
2 Corinthians 11:16-33
2/13/22
Message 17

Introduction

- Title of the Message is: “Suffering For Christ”

- **Review - Context for Chapter 10-13**

- **1st Paul has been DEFENDING his Apostleship**
 - He has Challenge
 - The Rebels in the church
 - The False teachers (The Judaizers)
 - He will encourage them to repent
 - Paul will NOT Mince words
 - There is NO Political Correctness taking place
 - Paul will answer his Accusers and destroy their false charges
 - (2 Cor. 10:7, 10–12; 11:4, 20–23)
 - He is NOT afraid to call it EVIL
 - The Judaizers in the church are ministers of Satan who want to destroy the work of God
 - (2 Cor. 11:12–15)
 - The ABRUPT Change in TONE

- As a Matter of Fact Some Believe because of the ABRUPT Change in TONE
 - That Chapter 10 - 13 are a part of another Book
 - That they were a part of the “severe letter” (2:4)
- But I Don’t believe that to be the case
 - The best interpretation views 2 Corinthians as a unified letter
 - With chapters 1–9 addressed to the repentant majority
 - Chapters 10–13 to the minority still influenced by the false teachers.
- **2nd What we can Learn From these Chapters**
 - There will be MANY Lessons
 - **1st God’s Work will ALWAYS have Challenges –**
 - There will always be those who attempt to tear it down
 - This is Nothing new and will continue until Jesus Comes
 - We MUST Understand this
 - *Steadman; “It’s difficult to argue with evil. Falsehood is a fortress that aggressively defends itself. If you try to attack evil and error, expect to be wounded. Expect to have your character and reputation smeared. Expect to be interrupted, shouted down, and ridiculed. You will fight fairly because you are a Christian—but your enemy will cheat, lie, threaten, and attack you in ways you can’t even imagine.”*
 - **2nd Paul Leadership**

- We Will see How to handle these Situations
- Meekness yet Boldness
- The AIM is always restoration – NOT REVENGE
- **3rd Conflict Between Congregations and Pastors**
 - Make sure we are dealing with this conflict Biblically
- **4th Today We see 2 more lesson**
 - 1st This Portion of Scripture is an indictment against a Wayward Church
 - Entrainment Driven Church
 - Comfort Driven Church
 - Consumer Driven Church
 - Prosperity – Success Driven Church
 - That if your suffering you are doing something wrong
 - Emotionally / Feelings Driven Church
 - **Show Pic**
 - 2nd Struggles at time are a part of God's Will
 - There are some who say you should never struggle –
 - That if you're struggling your outside God's Will
 - You're Doing something Wrong

- Now I know Many time we do create our OWN Struggles
 - BUT there are times when our struggles are because we are in the center of His Will
 - Paul is our example this morning
 - Does anyone remember what were the Lords first words to Paul after his conversion?

Acts 9:15–16 (NKJV)

15 But the Lord said to him, *“Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel.*

16 *For I will show him how many things (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!) – How Many things he must suffer for My name’s sake.”*

- So this Moring
 - If you’re in a Struggle (Trail)
 - If you’re being persecuted for your faith
 - Take courage from God and Paul’s Life this morning

• Paul Example gives us 7 Powerful Truth’s About Suffering for Christ

- His REMARKS about boasting vs. 16-19
- The REPROACH they endured from others vs. 20-21
- The REFERENCE to His Jewish background v. 22
- The REVIEW of what he suffered vs. 23-27
- The REMINDER of his daily responsibilities v. 28
- The REALIZATION of his true motivations vs. 29-31
- The RESCUE he experienced at Damascus vs. 32-33

His REMARKS about boasting vs. 16-19

- First: Let no one think me a fool... I also may boast a little v. 16**

2 Corinthians 11:16 (NKJV)

16 *I say again, let no one think me a fool. If otherwise, at least receive me as a fool, that I also may boast a little.*

○ **1st Repeating himself from v. 1**

- Paul was reluctant to defend himself against the criticisms
 - That is why he says again
 - He is going to play the “fool” and boast a little
- BUT –
 - He felt compelled to PROTECT the flock
 - To establishing his authority
 - Paul’s accusers are so in the world (Evil)
 - Paul has no choice BUT to stand up to them
- NOTE – As we go through this passage
 - We will see Paul is NOT really boasting himself –
 - He is boasting in the LORD
 - Paul is taking them on a journey

2 Corinthians 11:30 (NKJV)

30 *If I must boast, I will boast in the things which concern my infirmity.*

• **Second: What I speak vs. 17-18**

2 Corinthians 11:17–18 (NKJV)

17 *What I speak, I speak not according to the Lord, but as it were, foolishly, in this confidence of boasting.*

18 *Seeing that many boast according to the flesh, I also will boast.*

- **1st Not According to the Lord**

- Paul speaks not according to the Lord in the sense that his defense of his credentials focuses on himself.

- **2nd Foolishly**

- Paul didn't like to talk about himself.

2 Corinthians 4:5 (NKJV)

5 For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake.

- **3rd Seeing that Many Boast**

- Paul feels forced into writing about himself:

• **Third: For you put up with fools gladly, since you yourselves are wise!**

2 Corinthians 11:19 (NKJV)

19 For you put up with fools gladly, since you yourselves are wise!

- **1st Paul uses biting sarcasm.**

- If the Corinthian Christians are wise enough to put up with so many fools...
- Surely - they can listen to Paul for a while!

The REPROACH They Endured From Others vs. 20-21

• **First: For you put up with it if one brings you into bondage v. 20a**

2 Corinthians 11:20 (NKJV)

20 For you put up with it if one brings you into bondage, if one devours you, if one takes from you, if one exalts himself, if one strikes you on the face.

- **1st They Are putting Up with the “Eminent Apostles” – Super Apostles**

- **Brings you into bondage**

- The Greek verb translated by this phrase appears only in Gal. 2:4
 - Where it speaks of the Galatians' enslavement by the Judaizers.
 - The false apostles had robbed the Corinthians of their freedom in Christ

- **The Corinthian Christians**

- Put up with abuse from "super apostles,"
- Thinking that it is somehow spiritual to endure such bondage.

- **2nd First – BONDAGE**

- First Mark of Super Apostles – False Teachers
- The BONDAGE to the LAW – RULES – DOMINATION
- Paul refers to is the personal domination and authority the most eminent apostles held over others.
- The emphasis on...
 - Image
 - Outward appearance
 - An authoritarian approach to leadership
 - Seeking to control every aspect of your life -
 - Control is the FOCUS – Not Freedom in Christ

- **3rd Paul Was always Bring them back to GRACE – The Bible**

- **Second: If one devours you, if one takes from you, if one exalts himself, if one strikes you on the face v. 20b**

2 Corinthians 11:20 (NKJV)

20 For you put up with it if one brings you into bondage, *if one devours you, if one takes from you, if one exalts himself, if one strikes you on the face.*

○ **1st Second - Devours YOU**

- Or “preys upon you”
- This most likely refers to the false teachers’ demands for financial support
 - The same verb appears in Luke 20:47
 - Where Jesus denounces the Pharisees for devouring widows’ houses
- So the Second Mark of a Super Apostle – False Teacher
 - We want MONEY
 - It’s ALL about the Money
 - So the Corinthians PUT UP with them pressuring them for money even when they did not have any
 - So watch How ministries ask for money – be wise
- Paul did not receive their money –

○ **2nd If One Takes from You**

- Better translated “takes advantage of you”
 - It is translated “I caught you by cunning” in 12:16
 - Manipulation

- The false apostles were attempting to catch the Corinthians like fish in a net
- Paul was always pointing them back to the Word
- **3rd Exalts Himself**
 - This refers to one who is Arrogant
 - Puts on airs, acts arrogantly, or lords it over people
 - Paul was HUMBLE
- **4th Strick you on the face**
 - The false apostles may have physically abused the Corinthians,
 - BUT the phrase is more likely used in a metaphorical sense (1 Cor. 9:27)
 - To speak of the false teachers' humiliation of the Corinthians.
 - To strike someone on the face was a sign of disrespect and contempt (cf. 1 Kin. 22:24; Luke 22:64; Acts 23:2).
 - Intimidation
 - Paul Never Intimidated – he Pleaded & Begged

• **Third: To our shame, I say that we were too weak for that! V. 21**

2 Corinthians 11:21 (NKJV)

21 *To our shame I say that we were too weak for that! But in whatever anyone is bold—I speak foolishly—I am bold also.*

- **1st Paul continues the sarcasm**

- Confessing that he is too “weak” to abuse his sheep the way the “super apostles” do.
- Guilty as charged!
- **2nd But in whatever anyone is bold – I speak foolishly – I am bold also:**
 - The most eminent apostles were bold in proclaiming their greatness.
 - So, Paul will be bold also but in doing so, he will speak foolishly.
 - The rest of the chapter contains Paul’s “foolish boasting” about the things that prove him to be a true apostle.

The REFERENCE to His Jewish Background v. 22

• First: Are they Hebrews? So am I v. 22

2 Corinthians 11:22 (NKJV)

22 Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I.

- **1st Context**
 - The false teachers made much of their Jewish ancestry
 - They claimed to be
 - Full-blooded Hebrews
 - Descended from Israel
 - The seed of Abraham.
 - They still labored under
 - The delusion that this family tree gave them special favor in the sight of God.

- God has Open the Gospel message to the Gentiles now
- **2nd Paul Humors them**
 - His Religious Devotion
 - “Are they Hebrews?”
 - So am I”
 - His National Dedication
 - “Are they Israelites?”
 - So am I”
 - His Physical Descent
 - “Are they the seed of Abraham?”
 - So am I”
 - *Paul knows very well that his blood ancestry does not make him an apostle or a servant of Jesus*

The REVIEW of What He SUFFERED vs. 23-27

- **First: Are they ministers of Christ? – I speak as a fool – I am more v. 23a**

2 Corinthians 11:23 (NKJV)

23 Are they ministers of Christ?—I speak as a fool—I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often.

- **1st Are they ministers of Christ?**
 - Paul had already emphatically denied that they were (v. 13)

- However - some of the Corinthians still believed they were.
- **Paul is now going to define what a MINISTER should look like**
 - And these guys DON'T match
 - The most eminent apostles claimed to be ministers of Christ
 - When they used this term, it probably sounded like an honored, privileged title
- **2nd Define the word - Minister**
 - Definition of Minister
 - Greek word - Diakonos
 - Means –
 - Servant, one who serves, without necessarily having the office of deacon (Mt 20:26; Ro 16:1; Eph 6:21; 1Th 3:2)
 - It describes a humble servant or a menial worker.
 - Not After a TITLE to Appear Superior
 - No Doubt these Super Apostle used the title to appear Superior
- **3rd Lesson – It's NOT about a title – It about being a servant**
 - Paul would have no problem with title minister
 - But he had a big problem with them using the Title to Promote themselves

- For ME
 - Understand when People use the “Title Pastor” Respect I get that
 - BUT I struggle with when the title is demanded to be used
 - Some Pastor can use it in authoritarian way
 - This Should NEVER be the CASE – STAY HUMBLE SERVANT

• **Second: In labors more abundant v. 23b**

2 Corinthians 11:23 (NKJV)

23 *Are they ministers of Christ?—I speak as a fool—I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often.*

- **1st I Speak as a Fool**
 - Again – It is foolish to boast
- **2nd BUT if you insist – In Labors MORE**
 - Paul - I am more
 - In labors more abundant
 - Paul Labored for the Christ
 - Super Apostles – False Teacher
 - Not so much
 - They want the easy street
 - All the fame NOT all the Work

○ **3rd Mark of a TRUE ministry - Work HARD**

- He NEVER watches the Clock
- It is his lifestyle
- He is ALWAYS on duty 24/7
- There is NO place for Clock watchers in the Ministry – or someone who can say he is OFF duty
- Yes - Family time is important –
 - But your not off duty – your just doing a different way

• **Third: In stripes above measure v. 23c-24**

2 Corinthians 11:23 (NKJV)

23 Are they ministers of Christ?—I speak as a fool—I am more: in labors more abundant, **in stripes above measure**, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often.

2 Corinthians 11:24 (NKJV)

24 From the Jews **five times** I received forty stripes minus one.

○ **1st Paul's Suffering – Stripes**

Deuteronomy 25:3 (NKJV)

3 Forty blows he may give him and no more, lest he should exceed this and beat him with many blows above these, and your brother be humiliated in your sight.

- **The Rabbis restricted the number of stripes you could give to 39 (forty stripes minus one).**
 - They did this not out of mercy
 - But they feared that there might be a miscount and forty stripes would be exceeded by accident.

- **Describe Receiving Strips**

- 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
- 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." (Mishna, fol. 22, 2; cited in Clarke)

- **2nd Mark of a True Minister**

- Willing to Suffer – Yes even Physical abuse

- **Fourth: In prisons more frequently v. 23d**

2 Corinthians 11:23 (NKJV)

23 Are they ministers of Christ?—I speak as a fool—I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, **in prisons more frequently**, in deaths often.

- **1st In prisons more frequently.**

- Only one of these imprisonments recorded in the Scripture, up to this time in Paul's career, is that of Acts 16:23
 - Where he and Silas were thrown into the jail at Philippi.
- Now we learn that this was only one of many imprisonments, that Paul was no stranger to the dungeon.
- Again - when Paul went into a city
 - He never asked how the Hotels were – But How the Prisons were

○ **2nd Mark of a True Minister**

- Willing to suffer – Even Prison
- Pastors - Tobias Tissen, James Coates, Tim Stephens, Etc...

• **Fifth: In deaths often v. 23e**

2 Corinthians 11:23 (NKJV)

23 *Are they ministers of Christ?—I speak as a fool—I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, **in deaths often.***

○ **1st In Death**

- Paul - Close to death or dead?
 - Or Maybe “Just Mostly Dead...”
 - What do you have on this earthy worth living for?
 - Twue Wuv
- The incident in Lystra (recorded in Acts 14:19) must be what Paul refers to when he says once I was stoned.

○ **2nd Mark of a True Minister**

- Willing to Die for the cause of Christ
- “If you are not willing to die for Christ – How can you live for Christ”

• **Sixth: A Lot More Suffering vs. 25-27**

2 Corinthians 11:25–27 (NKJV)

25 *Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep;*

26 *in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren;*

27 *in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness—*

○ **1st Three Times I was Beaten With Rods**

- Not Just Once BUT 3 Times
- Refers to Roman beatings with flexible sticks tied together
 - (Acts 16:22, 23).

○ **2nd Once Stoned**

- Again - This is no doubt the occasion at Lystra
- This stoning was so severe that Paul's body was dragged out of the city, supposedly dead.

○ **3rd Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; In Journeys Often vs. 25-26a**

- Not including the shipwreck on his journey as a prisoner to Rome (Acts 27) which had not yet taken place.
 - Paul had been on several sea voyages up to this time (Acts 9:30; 11:25, 26; 13:4, 13; 14:25, 26; 16:11; 17:14, 15; 18:18, 21)

- Giving ample opportunity for the 3 shipwrecks to have occurred.
- A night and a day I have been in the deep
 - At least one of the shipwrecks was so severe that Paul spent an entire day floating on the wreckage, waiting to be rescued.
- And we complain about flying Southwest...
 - In the modern world, a busy travel schedule can be hard on anyone.
 - Think of what it was like in the ancient world!
 - Through the book of Acts, we read of no less than 18 journeys Paul took by ship, with half of them occurring before the writing of 2 Corinthians.
 - Since the book of Acts is an incomplete record, there were many more in addition to this.
- **4th All these perils simply add up to a hard, stress-filled life:**
 - In perils of waters:
 - This refers to the great dangers Paul faced in crossing rivers as he traveled.
 - In perils of robbers:
 - One of the worst dangers of travel in the world back then
 - Was muggers ready to rob isolated travelers in the middle of nowhere (as Jesus illustrated in Luke 10:30).
 - In perils in the city:

- Paul experienced many hostile mobs in the cities where he preached (Acts 13:50, 14:5, 14:19, 16:19, and so forth).
- In perils in the wilderness:
 - In his travels, Paul spent many dangerous days and nights in the wilderness.
- In perils in the sea:
 - This refers to Paul's many shipwrecks and difficulties when traveling by sea.
- In perils among false brethren:
 - Paul had the danger of those who said they were brothers and his friends, but were false brethren instead (2 Timothy 4:14 is a later example).
- In weariness and toil
 - A life live sold out to Jesus will be a life of weariness and toil
- In sleeplessness often
 - A lot of night sleep lost
- In hunger and thirst - In fasting's often
 - Not a Starbuck on every corner
- In cold and nakedness
 - Not a Holiday Inn on every corner
- **5th What we Learn**
 - **Paul's Life was HARD – BUT different**

- In our world –
 - It's Hard for us to understand the difficulties Paul faced.
 - We can get water and food and warmth so much more easily than Paul ever could.
 - Paul simply lived a hard life as a missionary, traveling and preaching the gospel.
- Paul's Life was Hard
 - So were other peoples lives
- What Set Paul Apart
 - All these perils and hardships were freely chosen
 - Because he could have lived differently if he wanted to.
 - But he didn't want to.
 - He wanted to serve Jesus - and if these hardships were part of serving Jesus, he would accept them.
 - *Oswald Chambers; "No healthy Christian ever chooses suffering; he chooses God's will, as Jesus did, whether it means suffering or not."*
- **How Did Paul have Joy In The Hardship**
 - Because he had died to himself!

Galatians 2:20 (NKJV)

20 *I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.*

- This wasn't just "spiritual talk" from Paul; he really lived it.

Romans 5:3 (NKJV)

3 And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance;

- Paul TRULY UNDERSTOOD

2 Corinthians 4:17–18 (NKJV)

17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,

18 while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

○ **6th How About You?**

- Redpath; "Such is the price that Paul paid. How does that react upon you? Do you congratulate yourself that you have escaped it? One week of such living and we would be done, but Paul went through it for a lifetime and gloried in his infirmities."
- The perils of Paul's life were really plenty enough to kill any man, but nothing or no one could kill him until God finished His purpose for Paul on this earth.
- We ONLY have one LIFE – How do you want to live it?
 - Extraordinary Life
 - Doing God's Will even if it means suffering
 - Ordinary Life
 - A life of EASE

The REMINDER of his Daily Responsibilities v. 28

2 Corinthians 11:28 (NKJV)

28 *besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches.*

○ **1st Catch THIS**

- We just went DOWN the LIST of Sufferings
 - Things that would have killed most if NOT all of US
- PAUL Say
 - What Daily Comes
 - MY Deep Concern for the Church
 - Paul lived with
 - A deep concern for all the churches
 - That NEVER Left him
 - Paul's burdens were not only physical, but they were also emotional.
 - Paul's deep concern was NOT for HIMSELF
 - BUT It was for OTHERS
 - *Redpath; on what comes upon me daily: "I could not possibly convey to you adequately in the English language the force of that statement. I tried to picture it in terms of being smothered under a blanket, or by being attacked and crushed by some great animal, for he could not have used a stronger word when he said, in effect, 'That which bears me down, that which is upon me as an intolerable load, that which is a burden, that which is something that I can never shake off day or night. It is with me always. I have no vacation for it ever. It is upon me daily. The care, the compassion, the concern of all the churches.'"*

○ 2nd Lesson

- *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?*

The REALIZATION of his true motivations vs. 29-31

- **First: If I must boast, I will boast in the things which concern my infirmity:**

2 Corinthians 11:29–31 (NKJV)

29 *Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation?*

30 *If I must boast, I will boast in the things which concern my infirmity.*

31 *The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying.*

○ 1st What is Paul's boast?

- Not his successes
- Not his gifts or abilities
- But
 - His weaknesses
 - His reproaches
 - The humiliations he endured

The RESCUE he experienced at Damascus vs. 32-33

- **First: In Damascus... I was let down in a basket through a window:**

2 Corinthians 11:32–33 (NKJV)

32 *In Damascus the governor, under Aretas the king, was guarding the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desiring to arrest me;*

33 *but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and escaped from his hands.*

○ **1st In thinking of his sufferings**

- Paul's mind instinctively goes back to the most humiliating moment in his entire career.
- The experience he had at Damascus (Acts 9:19–25)
 - After his conversion near Damascus
 - Paul began to preach the gospel in the synagogues there.
 - At first his preaching aroused curious interest
 - But after a while the Jews plotted to kill him.
 - They set a watch at the gates day and night, desiring to arrest him.
 - One night the disciples took the apostle, placed him in a basket, and lowered him through a window in the wall of the city to the ground outside.
 - He was then able to escape.

Closing

- Did you know?
 - More people were tortured for their faith in Jesus Christ in the 20th century than in all the previous 19 combined!
- Did you know?
 - 100 million people were martyred for their faith in the 20th century
- Today –

- An estimated 200 million Christians are facing persecution around the world
- We have been BLESSED to NOT be Persecuted
 - Sadly – we have used our blessing to go inward to become consumers
- Let's Make sure we are Burning for Jesus
- Let's be ready for the Persecution