

Chapter 15

The Sufferings of Paul

A. **This Time Paul was Imprisoned as an “Evil-Doer.”**

1. **2 Timothy 3:12** – “Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.”
2. **1 Peter 4:16** – “Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.”

B. **Before Becoming a Christian, Paul had Caused Others to Suffer Greatly.**

1. The first mention of Saul in the Bible is the role of a persecutor. **Acts 7:57-58** – “Then they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at him with one accord;
58 and they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul.”
2. **Acts 8:1-4** – “Now Saul was consenting to his death. At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.
2 And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him.
3 As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison.
4 Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.”
3. **Acts 9:1-2** – “Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest
2 and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.”
4. **Acts 26:9-11** – “Indeed, I myself thought I must do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.
10 This I also did in Jerusalem, and many of the saints I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them.
11 And I punished them often in every synagogue and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly enraged against them, I persecuted them even to foreign cities.”

5. **Galatians 1:13** – “For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it.”
6. **Galatians 1:23** – “But they were hearing only, “He who formerly persecuted us now preaches the faith which he once tried to destroy.”
7. **Philippians 3:6** – “Concerning zeal, persecuting the church . . . “
8. **1 Timothy 1:13** – “. . . I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man.”

C. Suffering would be a Part of Paul's Christian Life.

1. The Lord spoke to Ananias concerning Paul's suffering
Acts 9:15-16 – “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 he must suffer for My name's sake.’”
2. The Lord's word to Ananias certainly came true.

D. Was Paul Persecuted? Did He Indeed Suffer as a Christian?

1. **2 Corinthians 4:8-12** – “. . . We are perplexed, but not in despair;
 9 persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed --
 10 always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.
 11 For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.
 12 So then death is working in us, but life in you.”
2. **Galatians 5:11** – “And I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why do I still suffer persecution? Then the offense of the cross has ceased.”
3. **2 Timothy 3:10-11** – “But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance,
 11 persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra -- what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me.
4. **1 Corinthians 15:30-32** – “And why do we stand in jeopardy every hour?
 31 I affirm, by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily.
 32 If, in the manner of men, I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantage is it to me? If the dead do not rise, “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!”
5. **2 Corinthians 4:7-18** – “But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.
 8 We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair;

9 persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed --

10 always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.

11 For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.

12 So then death is working in us, but life in you.

13 And since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, 'I believed and therefore I spoke,' we also believe and therefore speak,

14 knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus, and will present us with you.

15 For all things are for your sakes, that grace, having spread through the many, may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God.

16 Seeing the Invisible Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day.

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.

6. **2 Corinthians 6:3-10** – “We give no offense in anything, that our ministry may not be blamed.

4 But in all things we commend ourselves as ministers of God: in much patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses,

5 in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in fastings;

6 by purity, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love,

7 by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left,

8 by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and yet true;

9 as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and yet not killed;

10 as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.”

7. **2 Corinthians 12:5-10** – “Of such a one I will boast; yet of myself I will not boast, except in my infirmities.

6 For though I might desire to boast, I will not be a fool; for I will speak the truth. But I refrain, lest anyone should think of me above what he sees me to be or hears from me.

7 And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure.

8 Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me.

9 And He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

11 Signs of an Apostle I have become a fool in boasting; you have compelled me. For I ought to have been commended by you; for in nothing was I behind the most eminent apostles, though I am nothing.

12 Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds."

8. **Galatians 4:13, 15** – "You know that because of physical infirmity I preached the gospel to you at the first."

15 What then was the blessing you enjoyed? For I bear you witness that, if possible, you would have plucked out your own eyes and given them to me."

9. **Galatians 5:1** – "Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage."

10. **Galatians 6:7** – "From now on let no one trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus."

11. **Romans 9:1-2** – "I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit,

2 that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart."

E. **Paul's list of sufferings in 2 Corinthians 11:23-28**

1. **2 Corinthians 11:23-28** – ". . . in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often.

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

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 --

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

2. Perhaps we have come to believe that this is a list of **ALL** the sufferings Paul endured in his ministry. Not so! Consider the following:
 - a. 2 Corinthians is the fourth book Paul wrote. It was written from Macedonia in the autumn of 57 A.D. during his third missionary journey.
 - b. It is believed that Paul's conversion occurred in 36 A.D. and his death in Rome in 68 A.D. That would indicate a ministry of some 32 years. Since 2 Corinthians was written in 57 A.D. and recorded sufferings Paul had endured up to the time of the writing, **the list would encompass the first 21 years of Paul's 32-year ministry, but would not include the last 11 years of his life and work.** Thus, the list would not include:
 1. The 4th and final year of the 3rd missionary journey.
 2. Paul's arrest and treatment in Jerusalem.
 3. Paul's two-year imprisonment in Jerusalem.
 4. Paul's perilous journey from Caesarea to Rome that included:
 - a. Another shipwreck
 - b. A snakebite
 5. Paul's first Roman imprisonment in Caesarea.
 6. Paul's "house arrest" imprisonment in Rome.
 7. The three-to-four year period between the first and second Roman imprisonment.
 7. Paul's second Roman imprisonment which resulted in his execution.
 - c. Therefore, **the list of sufferings in 2 Corinthians 11:23-28 would include Paul's sufferings during the first two-thirds of his 32-year ministry, but not include the final one-third.**
3. A closer examination of Paul's 2 Corinthians sufferings,
 - a. **"In labors more abundant." 2 Corinthians 11:23**
 1. The sufferings of Paul in laboring for the advancement of the cause of Christ were unparalleled and alone when compared to others.
 2. Some did not labor. Nonetheless, they claimed the fruits of Paul's labors. **2 Corinthians 10:15-16**
 - b. **"In stripes above measure." 2 Corinthians 11:23**
 1. This particular suffering probably refers to scourgings inflicted by the heathen. Their scourgings would not be limited to forty stripes, save one, which the Jews restricted.
 2. Scourgings from the Jews will be mentioned later.
 - c. **"In prisons more frequently." 2 Corinthians 11:23**
 1. Up to this point in Paul's life (A.D. 57), Luke has recorded only one imprisonment of Paul, and that at Philippi. **Acts 16:23-29**
 2. It should be observed that Luke does not give a complete accounts of Paul's life and work in his writing of Acts. Many details are omitted.

Therefore, much that was said and done is simply not recorded in Acts nor referred to in any of Paul's writing.

- d. **"In deaths often." 2 Corinthians 11:23**
 - 1. Paul was frequently confronted with situations that could have resulted in death.
 - 2. **2 Corinthians 4:11** – "For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh."
- e. **"From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one." 2 Corinthians 11:24**
 - 1. Some simple calculations would indicate that Paul was assigned a total of 200 stripes with 195 actually being inflicted.
 - 2. None of these occasions is mentioned in Acts. However, it is possible that he had been whipped at Damascus after his conversion. Perhaps he was also beaten in Jerusalem and Antioch in Pisidia. We cannot know conclusively.
 - 3. The chiefs of the synagogues had the power to inflict stripes on their people. No doubt, they would delight in inflicting such on Paul as he would frequently preach in their synagogues that which they thought to be heresy.
 - 4. **Deuteronomy 25:2-3** – "Then it shall be, if the wicked man deserves to be beaten, that the judge will cause him to lie down and be beaten in his presence, according to his guilt, with a certain number of blows.
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."
 - a. Josephus, in Antiquity IV, noted that the Jews were careful not to exceed thirty-nine.
 - c. Should forty stripes be exceeded, the executioner could be subject to punishment.
 - 5. For this type of punishment, the victim was stripped to the waist and tied in a bent position to a low pillar, and the stripes with a whip of three thongs were inflicted on the back between the shoulders.
- f. **"Three times I was beaten with rods." 2 Corinthians 11:25**
 - 1. This was a Roman method of scourging. It sometimes resulted in death.
 - 2. Only one of these three occasions is recorded in Acts, and that in **Acts 16:22-24**.
 - a. On this recorded occasion in Philippi it was an illegal act in Paul's case.

- b. With backs bleeding and sore, Paul and Silas were cast into the dark dungeon and their feet were made secure in the stocks in the inner prison (maximum security).
- g. **“Once I was stoned.” 2 Corinthians 11:25**
 1. Stoning was the usual Jewish mode of punishing blasphemy.
 2. This occasion is recorded in Acts 14:19 and occurred at Lystra during Paul’s 1st missionary journey.
 3. Paul, then known as Saul, is first mentioned in the Bible in Acts 7:58 on the occasion of Stephen’s being stoned to death. One cannot help but wonder if perhaps Paul thought of Stephen as he himself was being stoned.
- h. **“Three times I was shipwrecked.” 2 Corinthians 11:25**
 1. None of these instances are recorded in Acts. However, Paul frequently traveled by ship.
 2. Defective navigation, unskilled shipbuilding, and want of the mariner’s compass, shipwrecks were frequent.
 3. However, Paul would suffer at least one more shipwreck, and that on his way from Caesarea to Rome. **Acts 27:14-44**
- i. **“A night and a day I have been in the deep.” 2 Corinthians 11:25**
 1. Perhaps Paul was able to support himself on some floating piece of debris from the ship until he was rescued.
 2. It is not hard to imagine that Paul would spend this time in closeness to God much as he and Silas had done when cast into the inner prison (maximum security) in Philippi in Acts 16.
- J **“In journeys often.” 2 Corinthians 11:26**
 1. Traveling in the days of Paul was both difficult and dangerous.
 2. Paul’s ministry brought him into contact with the Jews, Gentiles, magistrates, mobs, and soldiers.
 3. His travels brought him into a variety of perils.
- k. **“In perils of waters.” 2 Corinthians 11:26**
 1. Perhaps this would involve rivers and streams. Many of the countries Paul traveled in abounded in un-bridged streams, rivers, and mountain torrents.
 2. There was a constant danger of death from drowning or being swept away by the sudden rush of swollen streams.
- l. **“In perils of robbers.” 2 Corinthians 11:26**
 1. Many areas were infested with robbers.
 2. It is very likely that with so much traveling, Paul was often attacked and his life endangered.
- m. **“In perils of my own countrymen.” 2 Corinthians 11:26**
 1. This would be the Jews. In most cases the Jews were the first to stir up opposition to Paul. This was done at:

- a. Damascus. **Acts 9:23**
 - b. Jerusalem. **Acts 9:29**
 - c. Antioch in Pisidia. **Acts 13:50**
 - d. Iconium. **Acts 14:5**
 - e. Lystra. **Acts 14:19**
 - f. Thessalonica. **Acts 17:5**
 - g. Berea. **Acts 17:13**
 - h. Corinth. **Acts 18:12**
- 3. The Jews had deep enmity against Paul as a follower of Christ and as an apostle. He was in constant danger of being put to death by the Jews.
 - a. **Acts 21:31**
 - b. **Acts 23:12-13**
 - c. **Acts 25:3**
- n. **“In perils of the Gentiles.” 2 Corinthians 11:26**
 - 1. This would refer to non-Jews—the Gentiles. The Gentiles were generally stirred up against Paul by the Jews.
 - 2. At various times the gentiles were stirred up against Paul because of their idolatry and superstitions. This was done at:
 - a. Iconium. **Acts 14:1**
 - b. Philippi. **Acts 16:9**
 - c. Ephesus. **Acts 19:23**
- o. **“In perils in the city.” 2 Corinthians 11:26**
 - 1. Damascus. **Acts 9:23**
 - 2. Jerusalem. **Acts 9:29**
 - 3. Antioch in Pisidia. **Acts 13:50**
 - 4. Iconium. **Acts 14:5**
 - 5. Lystra. **Acts 14:19**
 - 6. Philippi. **Acts 16:9**
 - 7. Thessalonica. **Acts 17:5**
 - 8. Berea. **Acts 17:13**
 - 9. Corinth. **Acts 18:13**
 - 10. Ephesus. **Acts 19:23**
- p. **“In perils in the wilderness.” 2 Corinthians 11:26**
 - 1. In traveling through the wild waste tracts of land between Perga and Antioch in Pisidia, or thence to Lystra and Derbe, or crossing the mountain of Taurus into the cities of Galatia, etc., there would be great dangers.
 - a. Weather
 - b. Wild beasts
 - c. Hunger and want
 - d. Inadequate shelter

- e. Robbers
 - 2. Whether in the busy cities of men or the solitude and loneliness of the desert, Paul met with constant danger.
- q. **“In perils in the sea.” 2 Corinthians 11:26**
 - 1. Perils in the sea could come in many forms. Among them would be:
 - a. Storms
 - b. Shipwreck
 - c. Ships being at the mercy of the sea and weather.
 - d. Being lost
 - e. Pirates
 - 2. Since Paul frequently traveled by sea in the course of his journeys, the risk of these type of perils was greatly increased.
- r. **“In perils among false brethren.” 2 Corinthians 11:26**
 - 1. Paul saw the treachery of those who professed to be his brothers in Christ, and yet endeavored to deliver him unto the power of his enemies.
 - 2. Betrayal hurts! It hurts worse when the betrayer is a friend. Judas betrayed Christ.
 - a. betrayal from within.
 - b. Internal spying on his work.
- s. **In weariness and toil.” 2 Corinthians 11:27**
 - 1. Wearisome toil and consequent exhaustion from his labors were frequent companions to Paul.
 - 2. Hard work produces weariness.
- t. **“In sleeplessness often.” 2 Corinthians 11:27**
 - 1. Paul experienced many sleepless periods in his Christian walk.
 - 2. He pursued his work by night as well as by day.
 - 3. On some occasions he sacrificed sleep for teaching and preaching.
 - 4. On some occasions he sacrificed sleep for prayer and meditation.
- u. **“In hunger and thirst.” 2 Corinthians 11:27**
 - 1. Through the lack of necessary food, Paul experienced hunger and thirst on a number of occasions. This may have been brought on by:
 - a. Danger keeping him away.
 - b. Not being around where food could be purchased.
 - c. Lack of money at times to buy the necessary food.
 - 2. No doubt there were many times when Paul was well nourished spiritually, while being famished physically.
- v. **“In fastings often.” 2 Corinthians 11:27**
 - 1. Fasting (the abstinence from food) was practiced by Paul when he preferred the service of Christ and labor for the salvation of men to the satisfaction of physical want. **2 Corinthians 6:5**

2. Although Paul would choose to abstain from food on various occasions, he always welcomed the opportunity to feed on God's word.

w. **"In cold and nakedness." 2 Corinthians 11:27**

1. In traveling to and through many half-civilized countries, Paul was often insufficiently clad. In his labors and travels his clothing became old and badly worn.
2. Many times there were no friends to replace them.
3. Many times there was no money with which to buy new clothes.
4. From his prison cell in Roman, Paul penned these words to Timothy "Bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas when you come -- and the books, especially the parchments . . . Do your utmost to come before winter . . ." **2 Timothy 4:13, 21**

x. **"Besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches." 2 Corinthians 11:28**

1. In addition to all of these many bodily afflictions, Paul felt the care of all the churches resting upon him.
2. Paul's writings indicate his constant concern and prayer for those to whom he was writing.
3. The anxiety which Paul had for the churches was more real and intense than that which many ordinary people have for food and raiment.
4. The number of sufferings listed in 2 Corinthians 11:23-28 by category is twenty-four (24). One third of that number (8) are "perils." So many, so varied, and so terrible, and yet in the Lord's service he had come safely through them all.
 - a. **2 Corinthians 6:9** – " . . . As dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and yet not killed."
 - b. Paul was truly owned by Christ. He literally bore in his body the marks of his devotion and faithfulness. Through his sufferings he continued to serve when it would have been much easier to turn back.

F. **Paul's Sufferings as Recorded in the Book of Acts**

1. His life was threatened in Damascus. **Acts 9:23**
2. His life was threatened again in Jerusalem. **Acts 9:29**
3. Persecuted and run out of Antioch in Pisidia. **Acts 13:50**
4. Faced possible stoning at Iconium. **Acts 14:5**
5. Stoned and left for dead in Lystra. **Acts 14:19**
6. Opposed and made the center of controversy. **Acts 15:11**
7. Experienced the loss of his close friend and co-worker, Barnabas. **Acts 15:39**
8. Beaten with rods and imprisoned at Philippi. **Acts 16:23**

9. Cast out of Philippi. **Acts 16:39**
10. His life was threatened in Thessalonica. **Acts 17:5-7, 10**
11. Forced out of Berea. **Acts 17:23-14**
12. Mocked in Athens. **Acts 17:18**
13. Taken before the judgment seat in Corinth. **Acts 18:12**
14. Opposed by the silversmiths in Ephesus. **Acts 19:23-41**
15. Plotted against by the Jews in Greece. **Acts 20:3**
16. Apprehended by the mob in Jerusalem. **Acts 21:27-30**
17. Arrested and detained by the Romans. **Acts 22:24**
18. Barely escaped being scourged. **Acts 22:24-29**
19. Rescued from the Sanhedrin mod action. **Acts 23:1-8**
20. Assassination plot against him. **Acts 23:12-22**
21. Two-year imprisonment in Caesarea. **Acts 23:33-27:2**
22. Shipwreck on the island of Melita (Malta). **Acts 27:41-28:1**
23. Suffered a snakebite. **Acts 28:3-5**
24. First Roman imprisonment. **Acts 28:13-15**

G. **Yes, Paul did Suffer.**

1. Through it all, Paul's faith continued to excel.
2 Corinthians 12:10 – "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.
2. **2 Corinthians 6:3-20** – "We give no offense in anything, that our ministry may not be blamed.
 4 But in all things we commend ourselves as ministers of God: in much patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses,
 5 in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in fastings;
 6 by purity, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love,
 7 by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left,
 8 by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and yet true;
 9 as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and yet not killed;
 10 as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things."
3. just as the Lord had delivered Paul through all of his sufferings, he delivered him home where he could be free from all those things which had befallen him for the cause of Christ.

- a. **2 Timothy 4:6-8** – “For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand.

7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

8 Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.”

- b. **Rest well brother Paul . . . rest well.**