What a Real Servant is willing to Endure

(Paul's sufferings)
2 Corinthians 11:16-33
11/13/2011



Introduction: (v.16-23a)

- ***A real servant of Christ is willing to suffer for his Master***

What type of suffering is a real servant of Christ willing to endure?

I. ***A real servant of Christ is willing to endure*** **<u>FREQUENT</u> suffering** (v.23b)

II. ***A real servant of Christ is willing to endure*** **<u>INTENSE</u> suffering** (v.24-26a)

III. ***A real servant of Christ is willing to endure*** **<u>DANGEROUS</u> suffering** (v.26)

IV. ***A real servant of Christ is willing to endure*** **<u>PHYSICAL</u> suffering** (v.27)

V. ***A real servant of Christ is willing to endure*** **<u>EMOTIONAL</u> suffering** (v.28-29)



Conclusion: vv. 30-33

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v. 16
Paul was certainly anything but a fool. However, the Corinthians would rather listen to fools than to him; they would be more quick to believe a fool than Paul. They would take quicker heed to a false apostle, a deceitful worker or a minister of Satan (v. 13-15) than to him.

Anyone who would "toot their own horn" would gain the Corinthians' attention and respect. So Paul here in verses 16-33 plays along with their game. He says in effect, if you view me as a fool, then listen to my little bit of foolish boasting; if you would so eagerly hear the boasting of others, then listen to some of mine.

Now Paul's boasting would <u>not</u> be with the motive of elevating himself through false pretense; but his motive was love for the Corinthians. So that they might gain a confidence in Paul (as a bonafied apostle) and might benefit in God's ministry through Paul. He would "very gladly spend ad be spent for you" (12:15).

v. 17
"Not after the Lord" - "Paul means that his forced boasting finds no example I the life of Christ. He had to indulge in it, he says, against his natural instincts, so that he could call some significant facts to their attention" (Ryrie Study Bible note).

v. 18
Since many at Corinth engaged in a carnal and worldly boasting for self-serving reasons, Paul would do a bit of boasting for selfless reasons.

v. 19
The Corinthians who prided themselves in their human wisdom would put up with bragging fools gladly.

v. 20
Isn't it ironic how people accept the most ungodly people find esteem them highly and reject someone who genuinely loved them.

The Corinthians would gladly put up with and endure those who would spiritually <u>enslave</u> them (through legalism), exploit them, take advantage of them, (robbing and using them) or who would promote themselves (as a politician) or smack them in the face (and bully them).

v. 21
Speaking with a bit of sarcasm, Paul says: "To my shame I admit that we were too weak for that" (NIV).

If anyone had bold grounds for boasting as a real minister of Christ, Paul certainly did.

"Are they" – the foolish "false apostles" (v. 13) that the Corinthians would gladly hear and heed.

v. 22
In terms of the flesh, Paul was a true Jew! He was a Hebrew (and spoke the language fluently – Acts 21:40, 22:2). He was an Israelite (a descendent of Jacob of the tribe of Benjamin – Phil. 3:5). He was genetically linked to Abraham, and by faith spiritually linked to Abraham (Rom. 4:16).

v. 23
If anyone could claim to be a minister of Christ, Paul had an enormous more weight of evidence that he was.

Perhaps no one in history did more, endured more, suffered more, spent more, said more, or invested more in the ministry for Christ, than Paul.

Paul, who prior to his conversion, gave every ounce of his energy to destroy Christianity; after his salvation would give every ounce of his life's blood to promote Christ and the true Christian faith.

- ***A real servant of Christ is willing to suffer for his Master***

What type of suffering is a real servant of Christ willing to endure?

I. ***A real servant of Christ is willing to endure*** **<u>FREQUENT</u> suffering** (v.23b)

v. 23b

"Labours" - work or toil. "The word emphasizes the weariness which follows on the straining of all of his powers to the utmost" (Trench, cited by Rogers, p. 415).

If you want to talk about wearisome toil done for Christ, Paul says, I surpass all of those alleged apostles floating around Corinth.

Paul endured immeasurable beatings (whippings) for Christ. From the stripes, Paul would receive before entering Philippian jail cell (Acts 16:23, 33), to the stripes that he would receive at Jerusalem by a Roman centurion – Acts 22:25.

Paul could say, "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus" (Gal. 6:17).

"In prisons" - Paul endured many places of confinement (both public and private). He would check in and checkout of more prisons than many business men would check in and out of hotels.

"In deaths oft" - Very often Paul would be in situations and circumstances in which he was in danger of imminent death.

The emphasis in verse 23 is on the descriptive adverbs – **"More. . . more abundant . . . above measure . . . more frequent . . . oft. . ."** – All of which emphasize the frequency in which Paul was willing to suffer. Suffering was a common experience to Paul.

II. ***A real servant of Christ is willing to endure*** **<u>INTENSE</u> suffering** (v.24-26a)

v. 24

In verses 24-26, Go continues to emphasize the <u>frequency</u> with which Paul suffered. The word **"five times. . . thrice. . . once. . . thrice. . . a night and a day. . . often"** show the relentless continual nature of the Satanic attacks toward Paul. It would not let up.

However, I would like to draw our attention to the specific <u>intensity</u> of the <u>diverse ways</u> in which Paul suffered. He was whipped, beaten with rods, stoned, shipwrecked, lost at sea, and traveled long, lonely roads.

"Of the Jews" - by the Jews in synagogues.

"Forty stripes" – the Law prescribed no more than forty lashes (Deut. 25:1-3), so as to avoid whipping someone to death.

The Jews would only give 39 in order to be certain of not exceeding the limit. It is ironic that they were conscientious about keeping one Law while they violated other laws in beating Godly innocent people like Paul and the ultimate example of perfection: our Lord Jesus Christ.

"The person had his two hands bound to a pillar on either side and his garments removed so that his chest was bare with a whip made of a strap of calf hide and two other straps of donkey hide connected to a long handle, the person received one-third of the thirty-nine stripes in front (on his chest) and two-thirds behind (on his back) while he was bending low. During this time the reader read over and over again Deut. 28:58" (Makkoth, cited by Rogers, p. 415).

v. 25

"Rods" - this was not a thin flexible shoot used by a father in disciplining his children, but refers "to the Roman method of beating which was often used as police coercion" (Rogers, p. 415-416).

"Stoned" - not pelted with small rocks, but pummeled with the crushing blows of large stones (large enough to kill someone). They thought they had killed Paul –

Acts 14:19

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.

2 Timothy 3:11

Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of *them* all the Lord delivered me.

"Shipwreck" – on one of these occasions, having been caught in a "tempestuous wind, called Euroclydon" (Acts 27:14), Paul and the crew of 276 souls were tossed to and fro in the midst of stormy seas for 14 days before the ship was blown apart, having struck land. The survivors made it to land by swimming and clinging to pieces of the broken ship (Acts 27).

v. 26a

"**Journeyings" -** travels by land on foot. For the Lord's sake, Paul traveled all over the known world (most often by foot), spreading the Gospel message.

Are we willing to drive our luxurious car or travel by comfortable jet to accomplish such work?

III. ***A real servant of Christ is willing to endure*** **<u>DANGEROUS</u> suffering** (v.26)

The operative word in verse 26 is the repeated word **"Perils"** which means <u>dangers</u>. Paul faced life-threatening dangers throughout his ministry.

He faced dangers from attempting to cross raging rivers, from pirates and bandits, from his own relatives as well as from the heathen. He faced dangers in big cities like Athens or Ephesus and in desolate wildernesses. He endured dangers on the Mediterranean or Adriatic Seas, as well as torrents or trouble from those who called themselves his Christian brothers.

IV. ***A real servant of Christ is willing to endure*** **<u>PHYSICAL</u> suffering** (v.27)

For the Gospel's sake, Paul endured weariness from the ministry's toil and labor. He endured countless sleepless nights, as well as an empty stomach and a dry thirsty throat. His many trials drove him to fasting and he even went without adequate clothing and would shiver in the cold, wet, damp conditions of seas and prison cells.

V. ***A real servant of Christ is willing to endure*** **<u>EMOTIONAL</u> suffering** (v.28-29)

v. 28
And, as if all of that wasn't bad enough; as if all that the world, the flesh and the devil could throw at him was not enough, he also carried with him the concern and worries for the spiritual well-being of the churches.

v. 29
When the saints were weak, Paul felt their weaknesses; when the saints were led into sin, Paul inwardly burned with righteous indignation.

Paul sympathized (felt with) and empathized (felt for) the saints who suffered.

Conclusion: vv. 30-33

v. 30
Paul's boastings of his sufferings, in fact, showed his human limitations and struggles and fears and sorrows. He will in chapter 12 speak of his thorn in the flesh, which would keep him humble and dependent on the Lord.

And he was not making this stuff up, as he would call on God as his witness that he was telling the truth.

v. 32
Paul would begin his ministry for Christ by facing persecution when he made his great escape at Damascus (v. 23-33); cp. Acts 9:24-25), and he would end his ministry by having his head chopped off and dying a martyr for Christ during the days of Nero (around 67 A.D. according to church tradition).

Acts 9:16
For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.

I wonder, how much am I willing to suffer for my Lord and Savior?

Am I a soldier of the cross

By Isaac Watts

Am I a soldier of the cross,
A follower of the Lamb,
And shall I fear to own His cause,
Or blush to speak His Name?

Must I be carried to the skies
On flowery beds of ease,
While others fought to win the prize,
And sailed through bloody seas?

Are there no foes for me to face?
Must I not stem the flood?
Is this vile world a friend to grace,
To help me on to God?

Sure I must fight if I would reign;
Increase my courage, Lord.
I'll bear the toil, endure the pain,
Supported by Thy Word.

Thy saints in all this glorious war
Shall conquer, though they die;
They see the triumph from afar,
By faith's discerning eye.

When that illustrious day shall rise,
And all Thy armies shine
In robes of victory through the skies,
The glory shall be Thine.