

**I. Review – 2Cor. 11:16-23a**

**A. Paul continues his “foolish speech” which began in verse 1**

- i. Paul stressed that he was not a fool but was only speaking as one to make his point.**
  - 1. A true apostle does not boast of himself nor does the Lord approve of such men.**
  - 2. But if boasting in oneself is what it takes to get the Corinthians’ attention, then that is what Paul will do – he will boast in himself - reluctantly!**
- ii. He starts with his ancestry...**
  - 1. Are they Hebrews?**
    - a. Do they read and speak the language of the Sacred Scriptures?**
    - b. Me too! I’m not a Hellenistic Jew, implies Paul.**
  - 2. Are they Israelites?**
    - a. Did they descend from Jacob?**
    - b. “Me too,” says Paul!**
  - 3. Are they offspring of Abraham?**
    - a. Does their family tree trace back to father Abraham?**
    - b. Mine does too! I’m not a proselyte (convert to Judaism), implies Paul!**
- iii. He then speaks of his apostleship...**
  - 1. Are they servants of Christ?**
    - a. And knowing how crazy this will sound, he says, “*I’m a better one!*”**
    - b. Then he proceeds to eclipse his critics with the following statements...**

**II. Continuation**

**A. 2Cor. 11:23b (ESV), “...with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death.”**

- i. With far greater labors:**
  - 1. He worked more than his critics did in the spreading of the gospel; traveling place to place, not to mention, he did physical labor, like making tents, in order to not be a financial burden to those whom he labored among.**
  - 2. The book of Acts shows how much Paul labored to propagate the gospel throughout the Gentile world.**
- ii. Far more imprisonments**
  - 1. Acts records one such imprisonment: at Philippi**
    - a. Acts 16:23-40:**
      - i. He was thrown into the inner prison, yet he prayed and sang hymns to God.**
      - ii. He was miraculously released, resulting in the jailor’s conversion.**
    - b. The book of Acts does not record the many other imprisonments Paul had to endure.**
    - c. By this statement, Paul shows that proof of one’s God-ordained calling is not shown by letters of commendation or the ability to deliver eloquent speeches, but the proper response to adversity!**
      - i. Earlier Paul said in his former epistle...**
        - 1. 1Cor. 4:12-13 (ESV), “*and we labor, working with our own hands. When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure;<sup>13</sup> when slandered, we entreat. We have become, and are still, like the scum of the world, the refuse of all things.*”**
          - a. Squeeze an orange, you get orange juice; persecute a true Christian, you get Christ-like behavior**
          - b. A true Christian does not fight fire with fire!**

- iii. With countless beatings and often near death
  - 1. Paul explains in detail these beatings that left him close to death in the next verse...
- B. 2Cor. 11:24-25a (ESV), *“Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one.<sup>25</sup> Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned...”*
  - i. Five times I received at the hands of the Jews forty lashes less one
    - 1. Paul refers to synagogue discipline of flogging which Jesus warned his disciples would have to face (cf. Matt. 10:17).
    - 2. Under Mosaic Law, 40 lashes was the limit when punishing a criminal (cf. Deut. 25:1-3).
      - a. Depending on the severity of the crime, a man would be flogged a certain amount of time, but 40 lashes was to be the limit.
      - b. In the Gentile world, there were no set limits when it came to flogging!
    - 3. There are various reasons given as for the reasons why the Jews gave 39 lashes:
      - a. A whip was usually made of three chords and the criminal would be struck 13 times with it, making a total of 39 lashes.
      - b. To prevent a miscount, they would stop at 39 so as to not be guilty of going beyond the Mosaic limit of flogging.
      - c. 39 lashes would give a façade of “leniency” when flogging a criminal of a severe crime.
      - d. In either case, Josephus, a Roman Jewish historian who was a contemporary of Paul, stated in his writings that the Jews would flog criminals 39 times.
    - 4. Apparently, Paul was accused by the Jews of a severe crime: so they gave him the maximum minus one.
    - 5. But that didn’t stop Paul from loving his own people. He kept going into synagogues, sharing the good news, despite the danger of being flogged.
  - ii. Three times I was beaten with rods.
    - 1. Acts 16:22 provides at least one instance of Paul, along with Silas, receiving a public beating at Philippi.
      - a. The Greek word used for beating (*“rhabdizo”*) means to beat with a stick or rods.
      - b. In Roman times, a person would be beaten with a heavy wooden rod by a Roman lictor.
  - iii. Once I was stoned.
    - 1. Acts 14:19ff provides the time when Paul was stoned by an angry crowd while he was in Lystra.
      - a. Despite being dragged out of the city and nearly stoned to death, he returned to the city the next day.
- C. 2Cor. 11:25b (ESV), *“...Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea;”*
  - i. Three times shipwrecked adrift at sea.
    - 1. The only shipwreck recorded in Acts is found in chapter 27 during Paul’s transfer as a prisoner to Rome well after he wrote 2Corinthians.
    - 2. Paul moved frequently by sea and unlike today, if a ship got wrecked, you only could hang onto floating objects, until rescue or death.
    - 3. Paul states that he has been shipwrecked three times, drifting at sea.
    - 4. This, along with the stoning incident, is perhaps the “near-death” experiences he had in mind in verse 23.