

**“Ministers Of Christ”**  
**2 Corinthians 11:23-33**

**Introduction:**

1. Let's Turn Back In Our Bibles This Morning:
  - To 2 Corinthians 11:
    - Where The Apostle Paul Was About To:
      - **“Play The Fool”** - For A While:
        - In Order To Get The Corinthians To Realize That:
          - They **Had Been Fooled:**
            - By The Boasting & Bragging Of The False Apostles Who Had Infiltrated Their Church!
  - And So - To “Play The Fool” - He Too:
    - Was Going To - In The Words Of 11:18:
      - “Glory Also!”
        - But Even When He Was Trying To Boast Like Those False Apostles Would Boast:
          - He Just Couldn't Get Himself To Do It - Or Do It Well!
  - Instead - As Paul Says In 11:30:
    - “If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities!”
      - His Weaknesses!
        - Clearly - Paul Doesn't Seem To Know What It Means To Boast!
          - But In Truth - He Knows That The Only Things He Has To Glory In Are What Will Bring God's Glory Into Light!
2. And So - After Comparing:
  - Pedigrees With The False Apostles:
    - In 11:22 - “Are they Hebrews? so am I. Are they Israelites? so am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? so am I!”
      - Then He Adds In 11:23:
        - “Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more!”
  - And From This Point On:
    - The Apostle Paul:
      - Recounts Some Of The Things:
        - He Experienced As One Of:
          - Christ's True Ministers / True Servants!
  - And These Are Some Things:
    - That The False Apostles **Couldn't** Claim & Even **Wouldn't** Claim!
      - They Believed That To Experience What Paul Experienced:
        - Was Rather A Mark Of Christ's:
          - Disfavor & Displeasure!
            - But Paul Knew The Truth About Serving Christ!
3. True & Faithful Servants:
  - Of Christ - Will Not Only **Learn** From Christ:
    - They Will Even Come To **Look** Like Christ!
      - Their Service:
        - Will Look Like Christ's Service!
          - There May Be Great Sacrifice Involved!
          - There May Be Great Suffering Involved!
  - And So - If Paul Was Going To Boast In Anything:
    - He Would Boast In The Fact That:
      - “[He Bore] In [His] Body The Marks Of The Lord Jesus!” (Galatians 6:17)
        - And This Is What He Describes For Us In The Rest Of Chapter 11!
  - 11:23-33 - “Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. / 24 Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. / 25 Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; / 26 In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; / 27 In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. / 28 Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. / 29 Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not? / 30 If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things

which concern mine infirmities. / 31 The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I lie not. / 32 In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me: / 33 And through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands!”

4. This Morning - I Want You To Realize That:

- What We Just Read:

- Is What You - As A True Servant Of Christ:

- May Expect To Experience In Your Life:

- As Well!

- Certainly Not In All Of The Details! But To Serve Christ Does Not Mean That You Will Have “Your Best Life Now!”

- It May Very Well Mean That:

- You Too Will Have To:

- “Bear In Your Body The Marks Of The Lord Jesus!”

- What Might These Marks Consist Of?

\* First - We Can Learn From The Life Of Paul That:

1. *A True Servant Of Christ May Experience Great Persecution!*

- As Paul Experienced In:

- 11:23-25 - Where He Begins To List:

- Some Of The Most Severe Trials He Faced:

- In His Ongoing Service For Jesus Christ!

- And As We Read Through Them We Need To Recognize:

- The Depth Of His Trials!

- When Paul Writes In 11:23 - “In Labors More Abundant!”

- With That Little Word “In” He Reveals:

- Just How Distressing His Struggles Were!

- He Was Often Engulfed By Them (**IE**: Like A Flood) & Felt Overwhelmed By Them!

- The “Labors” He Is Referring To Here:

- Describe The Physical & Mental & Emotional Toll It All Took On Him!

- We Can Also See:

- The Degree Of His Trials!

- They Were - “More Abundant!”

- They Were Extreme:

- As The Rest Of The Verse Tells Us:

- They Were Also “Above Measure” & “More Frequent” & “Oft!”

- They Often Caused Him To Wonder If His Life On Earth Was About To End!

- We Can Also See:

- The Duration Of His Trials!

- They Were Seemingly Endless!

- Because He Goes On - 11:23 - “In labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft!”

- Each Of These Trials:

- Seems To Refer To Some Kind Of Persecution:

- That Paul Went Through - And It Kept Getting Worse & Worse & Worse!

- Some Of These Trials:

- We Can Pin-Point In The Book Of Acts As Well:

- But Most Of These Trials:

- Paul Is Recounting Here For The First Time!

- But Then - In 11:25 - Paul Elaborates On:

- The Deaths Of His Trials!

- Paul Went Through - According To This List:

- 13 “Near Death” Experiences:

- **All** - In Service Of The Lord Jesus Christ!

- At The Hands Of The Jews:

- “Five Times Received I Forty Stripes Save One!”

- This Was According To Jewish Law - Which Limited Scourging To 40 Stripes -

Deuteronomy 25:2-3 - But The Law Also States - “According To His Fault By A Certain

- Number!"
- It Didn't Have To Be 40 Stripes!
  - It Could Have Been Much Less!
    - But This Shows The Rigidity & Lack Of Mercy From His Own People - The Jews!
- At The Hands Of The Romans:
  - "Thrice Was I Beaten With Rods!"
    - And The Romans Had No Such Law:
      - To Limit How Many Times A Victim Was Beaten!
  - In Fact - When Paul & Silas Was In Philippi:
    - In Acts 16:22-23 - We Are Told That They Were Beaten With "Many Stripes!"
- At The Hands Of A Mob:
  - "Once I Was Stoned!"
    - Paul Acutely Remembers The Time He Was Nearly Stoned To Death:
      - Outside Of The City Of Derbe - In Acts 14:19-20 - By A Mob Of Both Jews & Gentiles!
- At The Hands Of Nature:
  - "Thrice I Suffered Shipwreck" & "A Night And A Day I Have Been In The Deep!"
    - And Paul Is Not Even Describing The Shipwreck We Know About Toward The End Of His Ministry:
      - In Acts 27!
- So - In Paul's Life - There Were Still More Trials & Persecutions:
  - Yet To Come!
    - And This May Be True For You As Well:
      - This Morning!
  - Jesus Christ Himself:
    - Told Us To Expect These Kinds Of Trials & Persecutions:
      - In Our Lives & Service For Him!
        - John 16:33 - "In The World Ye Shall Have Tribulation!"
  - This Is Not Something:
    - That We Look Forward To!
      - And Yet - It Is Something That Is More Common Than Not:
        - In The History Of The Christian Church!
  - And As A True Servant Of Christ:
    - You Too May Experience:
      - Great Persecution!
        - But Do Not Let This Cause You To Fear Or Fall Away From The Lord!
  - Because - In The Same Breath In John 16:33:
    - Jesus Says - "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world!"
      - And You Can Trust In Him!

\* We Can Also See From The Life Of The Apostle Paul That:

**2. *A True Servant Of Christ May Experience Great Perils!***

- That Is - Dangers:
  - In Our Pilgrimage As Christians!
    - This Is How Paul Describes His Life:
      - In 11:26 - "In Journeyings Often!"
        - Paul Went On Many, Many Trips That Covered Many, Many Miles, But He Was Not On A Tour! **IE:**
          - What Did He Face?
- Common Dangers!
  - "In Perils Of Waters, In Perils Of Robbers!"
    - These Were Perils That Any Traveler:
      - Might Have Faced In Those Days!
  - The Waters:
    - Probably Refer To Those Rivers & Streams:
      - That Would Be Swollen & Swift During Those Spring-Time Thaws!
        - Not As Many Bridges Then As There Are Today! Quite Formidable!
- Comprehensive Dangers!

- “In Perils By My Own Countrymen, In Perils By The Heathen!”
  - It Didn’t Matter Where Paul Went:
    - Or Who Paul Met - There Were Always People Who Sought To Harm Him!
- Perhaps This Is What Paul Was Referring To:
  - Back In 4:8 - “We are troubled on every side!”
    - And Yet - He Still Loved - Especially - His Own People - The Jews!
      - Romans 10:1 - “Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved!”
- Constant Dangers!
  - “In Perils In the City, In Perils In The Wilderness, In Perils In The Sea!”
    - This Pretty Much Covers:
      - Anywhere Paul Could Possibly Travel To Or Through!
        - The City / The Country / The Sea!
  - As Paul Tells Us In 7:5:
    - “Our Flesh Had No Rest!”
  - But Then - To Top It All Off - Paul Also Experienced:
- Crushing Dangers!
  - “In Perils Among False Brethren!”
    - Out Of All The Dangers He Faced:
      - In His Pilgrimage - This Would Have Been The Most Crushing Of Them All!
  - There Were People Within The Churches:
    - He Had Founded & Loved With All His Heart:
      - Who Turned From Christ & Betrayed Him!
  - Imagine The Sorrow In Paul’s Heart:
    - When He Wrote To Timothy In 2 Timothy 4:10 - “Demas Hath Forsaken Me, Having Loved This Present World!”
- This Morning - You Need To Remember As Well:
  - That Your Life In Jesus Christ Is:
    - A Pilgrimage!
      - 1 Peter 2:11 - “Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims!”
  - And You Too:
    - May Experience Great Perils & Dangers!
      - Common / Comprehensive / Constant / Crushing!
  - But You Too - By The Grace & Through The Strength:
    - Of The Lord - Can Say As The Apostle Paul Said:
      - Acts 20:24 - “But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God!”
  - Don’t Let These Perils & Dangers:
    - “Move You” From Your Trust In:
      - And Your Service For Christ!
        - Because - “It Will Be Worth It All” When You Have Finished Your Course As Well!

### 3. ***A True Servant Of Christ May Experience Great Privation!***

- That Is - Hardships - That May Bring About Great Loss In Your Life!
  - 11:27 - “In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness!”
    - Here Are 8 More Conditions:
      - That Paul Faced In His Service For The Lord!
        - Not Just As He Traveled, But Throughout His Entire Ministry!
          - There Were:
- Personal Hardships!
  - “In Weariness And Painfulness!”
    - This Describes Paul’s Extreme Exertion & Extreme Exhaustion:
      - In His Service For Christ!
  - He Would Travel:
    - And Preach & Pray & Write & Work As A Tent-Maker:
      - In Every City He Went!
  - And He Would Often Go:



- Was Not From His Suffering For Christ:
- But In His Service For Christ!
- His Burden Was The:
- Care For All The Churches!
- The Word “Care” In 11:28 Describes Paul’s:
  - Anxiety & Anguish - Especially For:
    - The Needs & Burdens Of The Churches:
      - That He Ministered To As An Apostle!
- And His “Care” For Them Would:
  - “Come Upon Him Daily!”
    - Their Needs & Burdens:
      - Would Constantly Command & Even Consume His Heart & His Thoughts & His Prayers!
- And This Was In Addition To All The Other Struggles He Faced!
  - But Even More - His Burden Was A:
    - Compassion For All The Churches!
    - 11:29 - He Sympathized:
      - With Their Weakness! He Asked:
        - “Who Is Weak, And I Am Not Weak?”
          - No Matter What Kind Of Weakness They Had - Sickness / Sorrow / Suffering!
      - Paul Would Show Compassion!
        - He Could Say - “I Know What Your Going Through!” - I Am Weak As Well!
        - Also:
          - He Sympathized:
            - With Their Struggles!
              - “Who Is Offended, And I Burn Not?”
                - When They Would Stumble Or Stray Or Even Sin!
            - Paul Would Show Compassion!
              - And Say - I “Burn” & Am Consumed With Your Struggles As Well!

### Conclusion:

1. And This Is What Leads Paul To Say:
  - 11:30-31 - “If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities. / The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I lie not!”
    - Once Again - Paul Isn’t Very Good:
      - At This Boasting & Bragging Business:
        - Is He? Well - Not In The Eyes Of This World!
    - Because He Will Only Glory / Boast In:
      - Those Things That Will Bring:
        - The Glory Of God Into Greater Light:
          - In His Life!
    - As We Will See Later:
      - In 12:9 - “Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me!”
2. Everything Paul Went Through:
  - Was In Service For the Lord!
    - It Was No Great Thing For Him:
      - To Suffer These Things - For Christ:
        - And For His Church!
    - And To Reassure Us:
      - That This Is What His Life & Ministry Was All About:
        - And What Every Christian’s Life & Ministry:
          - May Be About - He Calls God Himself To Be His Witness!
      - God Knows That:
        - Paul Is Not Lying About The Truth!
          - Not Exaggerating The Truth!
          - Not Covering Up The Truth!
    - This **Really Is** What:
      - A Servant Of Christ May **Expect**:

- And Even **Experience** For The Lord!
- 3. And Then - To Prove His Point Even Further:
  - He Gives One Final, Specific Example:
    - In 11:32-33 - That Stuck With Him From The Beginning Of His Christian Life & Service - "In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me: / And through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands!"
  - Paul Experienced Great Suffering:
    - In A Real Place - "Damascus!"
    - By A Real Person - This "Governor Under Aretas!"
  - And From The Very Beginning - He Experienced:
    - Great Persecution - It Seemed The Whole City Was "Desirous To Apprehend Me!" - Paul Says!
    - Great Perils - Being Let Down "Through A Window In A Basket!"
    - Great Privation - Likely Fleeing With Only The Clothes On His Back!
    - Great Pressure - Not Knowing Where He Would Go & What He Would Do!
  - And Through It All:
    - He Was Humbled!
      - The Great & Mighty **Saul**:
        - Who Once Headed To Damascus:
          - "Breathing Out Threatenings And Slaughter Against The Disciples Of The Lord!" (Acts 9:1)
        - Became The Humble & Hurting **Paul**:
          - Who Had To Escape Damascus:
            - Within An Inch Of His Life!
- 4. But - Now - Paul Would Not Have It Any Other Way!
  - For As He Said In Romans 8:18:
    - "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us!"
- 5. And If You Have Believed In Jesus Christ:
  - And Have Become A Servant Of Christ Yourself:
    - This Is True For You As Well!
  - Yes - You Too May Have To Experience:
    - And Go Through - As Paul Did:
      - Great Persecution!
      - Great Perils!
      - Great Privation!
      - And The Great Pressures:
        - Of Living For & Serving Jesus Christ!
    - You May Even Have To:
      - "Bear In Your [Own] Body The Marks Of The Lord Jesus!"
      - But You Never Have To Doubt:
        - God's Love For You!
        - God's Presence With You!
        - God's Power In You!
    - And No Matter What You Face:
      - As "A Pilgrim & A Stranger" In This World:
        - You Can Even:
          - "Rejoice" When You Are "Counted Worthy To Suffer Shame For His Name!" (Acts 5:41)

**Grace Baptist Church**  
**Stephen Elmer, Pastor**  
 4245 North 200 West  
 Greenfield, Indiana 46140  
 317-326-2362  
[www.sermonaudio.com/wordofgrace](http://www.sermonaudio.com/wordofgrace)  
[www.growatgrace.org](http://www.growatgrace.org)  
[pastor-elmer@hotmail.com](mailto:pastor-elmer@hotmail.com)