

RUSSELL SANDERS

8-27-2021

THE APOSTLE PAUL – LESSON 57

HIS MANY HARSHIPS

All of the Apostles were tortured for Christ. All except John were martyred. But it is only Paul of whom we know so much of his sufferings for the Kingdom of Heaven. We saw only a few such instances in this series, but there were so many more.

Paul mentions them in 2 Corinthians 11:22-27. They include the following:

- Stripes above counting from whips
- In prison more than any others
- Left for dead often
- Five times whipped by Jews with 39 lashes. (forty is a death sentence)
- Three times beaten with rods
- Stoned once
- Shipwrecked three times
- A full day and night “in the deep” of the sea.
- On the road often
- Perils in the waters
- Perils of robbers on the roads
- Perils by the hand of his own country men, the Jews
- Perils from supposed Christian brothers against him
- Perils from the heathen
- Perils in the wilderness
- Weariness
- Watchings
- Fastings
- Hunger and thirst
- Cold and naked
- A chronic “thorn in the flesh” (2 Corinthians 12:7)

His life as a Christian was harder than anything you or I could imagine going through ourselves. But he said that God’s grace was sufficient to strengthen him through it all (2 Cor. 12:9 and Philippians 4:11-13.)

Why did Paul have it so hard? Well, some might read Galatians 6:7 where it says, **“Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.”** That goes along with the popular saying, “what goes around, comes around.” Eastern mysticism calls it “karma.”

That would seem to fit Paul's case. He (as Saul) persecuted the believers, imprisoned them, and some were killed by his relentless pursuit of them. Consequently, it came back upon him as a Christian himself, reaping what he had sown.

Others may reject that notion because Paul had a polarizing personality. Most people either loved him or hated him, with little or no middle ground. Those hating him would persecute him. But many of his perils came as a result of his many travels along perilous routes taking the gospel to many lands. These "testings" proved to strengthen him through God's favor (grace).

Whatever hardship you or I might experience pales in comparison. Yet our strength to endure is from the same source as his was. In Christ Jesus we find our strength.