

A Burden For Others

by Linville Dunaway, Corinth Christian Church

"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." (2 Corinthians 11:24-28)

Paul went through a lot in his service for the Lord. I'm sure that this is a partial list of things that he suffered. Last, but certainly not least on the list is the care of the churches. That may not sound like much to most people, but to a minister it tells a lot. Paul traveled a lot and helped a group of congregations in his ministry. Some had big problems, some with smaller problems, but all had troubles of some kind.

There was the trouble of division in congregations where different groups wanted to rule over the rest of the people. It even

happened within the apostles when they fussed over who would be the greatest of them. Paul stressed the need for unity within the believers and the need for all of them to be in subjection unto the Lord. They, or we, couldn't do the work that the Lord called them to do when they were arguing among themselves. There is much opposition from the evil and unbelieving people without Christians adding to the burden.

How wonderful it would be if we could say that Paul and the other early teachers and ministers of the gospel had been able to end such divisions. The truth is that the problem still lingers on even to this day. We hear of different congregations split by those wanting to rule over other members of the church. That is not what the Lord taught his followers to do. "But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister;²⁷ And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant.²⁸ Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." (Matthew 20:26-28)

Then there was the problem of a lack of love between those who made up the body of believers. Jesus said that the love the believers had for each other would show the world that they were indeed his followers. John 13:35. I'm afraid that back then and even today, some say that they love everyone, but the actions often show another story. If we love people our lives and actions

will show it and no amount of empty words will cover it up if we don't. The Lord knows the hearts of all men and we need to remember that we can hide nothing from him.

The Lord Jesus died on the cross to build a church, his church, which is the body of Christ. As a father hates to see his children fight among themselves the Lord doesn't want his children do it either. Think of it, believers can't show the world that we have something better and have a better life, if we act like the unbelieving sinners. When there were great revivals with many people being saved it was a time when the church lived as Christians in truth. If we want to see people saved we need to submit to the Word of God and live like we say that we do. There needs to be unity, not just within a congregation, but between the various churches. Then we would have something to show the lost beside our words.

It seems that Paul and the other preachers of the gospel had many church problems to deal with. Another one was people forsaking the meeting of the church. In Hebrews 10:25 it says, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." It grieves those who care for souls to see people play around with their salvation. There is no time to take it lightly and to go after the things of the world. These are some of the things that Paul spoke of concerning the care of the churches.

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THE ANCIENT CITY OF TARSUS

TARSUS, THE CHIEF CITY OF CILICIA, IN THE EASTERN PART OF ASIA MINOR, IS SITUATED ON THE BANKS OF THE RIVER CYDNUS, ABOUT 12 MILES FROM THE SEA. AS LONG AGO AS 833 B.C., IT WAS MENTIONED BY THE ANCIENT ASSYRIAN KING SHALMANESER! THROUGHOUT ITS HISTORY TARSUS HAS BEEN FAMED FOR ITS SCHOOLS, LIBRARIES AND OTHER ADVANCED SEATS OF LEARNING TO THE EXTENT OF RIVALING ANCIENT ATHENS AND ALEXANDRIA. IT WAS ALSO THE BIRTHPLACE OF THE APOSTLE PAUL (ACTS 21:39; 22:3), AND HE REVISITED THE CITY AT LEAST ONCE AFTER HE BECAME A FOLLOWER OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST! (CHS 9:30; 11:25) WHEN THE CITY CAME UNDER ROMAN DOMINION, ITS ALLEGIANCE TO JULIUS CAESAR WAS SO FIERCE THAT WHEN CAESAR WAS MURDERED, CASSIUS ORDERED THE CITY TO BE PLUNDERED! BUT LATER, IN COMPENSATION FOR THIS, MARK ANTONY NOT ONLY GRANTED IT MUNICIPAL FREEDOM AND EXEMPTION FROM TAXATION, BUT HE GAVE ALL THE INHABITANTS OF TARSUS THE GIFT OF ROMAN CITIZENSHIP!...

...THAT'S WHY, WHEN A CHIEF CAPTAIN OF A ROMAN LEGION REMARKED THAT IT TOOK A GREAT SUM TO BUY HIS FREEDOM, PAUL WAS ABLE TO SAY, "...BUT I WAS FREE BORN." (ACTS 22:28)

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