

Isaiah 52:14 As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men:

From here he continues on to “boast” some more, but his boasting becomes different, gradually moving from his qualifications to his ordeals and hardships. He appears to be vulnerable and feeble in their estimation, not strong like them. This isn’t the only time he has told of his earthly and religious qualifications for receiving human respect. But here it is to disarm those making claims of authority based upon mere human qualifications. If they were thus qualified, he surpassed them. None of this has any bearing upon the qualifications to be respected as a servant of the Lord. In Philippians he counts these human qualifications as refuse, dung.

Philippians 3:4 Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath wherof he might trust in the flesh, I more: ...

3:8 Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ.

And if they touted themselves as servants of Christ, he surpassed them. Though he surpassed in zeal and faithfulness and in souls saved and assemblies founded he cites none of this. Instead of recounting numerous successes to overwhelm them in the numbers game, he cites his adverse experiences in the course of his work. He bore in his body the marks of an Apostle of Christ. The marks of Christ’s sufferings. The marks of hardship and persecution as part of his service for Christ. And this was no surprise.

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

Galatians 6:17 From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.

Colossians 1:24 Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body’s sake, which is the church:

All faithful servants of their rejected Lord should expect at least some of this. It has been so since Abel, whose death the Lord cites as the first in a long history of those suffering for their faith and their God.

Matthew 23:35 That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar.

His adversaries in the assembly at Corinth prided themselves on their Jewish heritage. Yet he was one, too. Isn’t it ironic and pathetic that it was at the hands of the Jews he remarks,

34 five times received I forty stripes save one. 25

Paul concludes his “boasting,” sarcastically asking their forbearance with his foolishness. He cites the foolish boasting of his competitors as witness enough of their tolerance of fools. He labels it as “not after the Lord.” The Lord was our model and He never boasted of the mighty works God did through Him as the lowly Son of Man amongst His people Israel. We do well to guard against bragging about what the Lord has accomplished through us as we seek to serve Him. There is a place for reporting encouraging incidents in the work, Acts 14:27, but beware of slipping off that narrow path into the ditches on either side. The ditch of pride, seeking acclaim as more successful than some others, or the ditch of covetousness, showing one as deserving of more financial support. The numbers game is especially dangerous, whether attendance, “membership” or conversions. These are lost human souls that we seek to reach, not cattle being rounded up for the market, or fans for a sporting event.

2Corinthians 2:17 For we do not, as the many, make a trade of the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as of God, before God, we speak in Christ. (DBY)

See also ch.1:12; 4:2; 2Peter 2:3.

He gives examples of their lack of vigilance, perception and discernment.

Some were seeking to:

⊗ bring them into bondage (utterly enslave),

Galatians 2:4 And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage:

4:9 But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage

⊗ devour them,

Galatians 5:15 But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.

Matthew 23:14 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses,

⊗ take from them, [exploit them, take advantage of them, perhaps demanding a stipend or wages as their rightful due from the saints over which they were attempting to assume a leadership role. This practice is soundly condemned in the New Testament.]

1Peter 5:2 Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;

⊗ exalt self,

⊗ smite them on the face. [The Jewish leaders smote Jesus on the face.. (An insulting despiteful act.) This statement also sounds like those who practice the demonic “slain in the Spirit” healing rituals among professing Christendom.]

*Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned,  
Little had changed since they rejected and crucified their  
Messiah.*

The idea of Jews or any other natural or man made distinctions existing among believers is counter to the fundamental principle of the one body presented to the Corinthians in the first epistle. Men still miss that truth today.

1Corinthians 12:13 *For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.*

Galatians 3:28 *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.*

Colossians 3:11 *Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.*

Now he lists some experiences he endured as a apostle. THESE were the attributes that would identify a real apostle of Jesus Christ. Not pomp, power or position. He had already reminded them in his first letter, ch. 4:9-14. This is one of a number of lists of experiences Paul gives in the New Testament and especially in the epistles to the Corinthians. Also, throughout there are many incidental comments referring to Paul's sufferings. A study of these would probably yield fresh insights into the subject of taking up one's cross and serving the Lord.

#### **Persecution**

1. *in labours more abundant,*
2. *in stripes above measure,*
3. *in prisons more frequent, [At Philippi, Acts 16.]*
4. *in deaths oft, [As in 2Corinthians 1:8 For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life,*
5. *(24) Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. [Look for some of these in Acts.]*
6. *(25) Thrice was I beaten with rods, [Are these recorded in Acts?]*
7. *once was I stoned, [This is reported in Acts 14:19 where he was taken up as dead. Some think this was when he was caught up into the third heaven which he refers to in the next chapter.]*

#### **Personal Dangers.**

8. *thrice I suffered shipwreck, [This was before the famous storm and shipwreck suffered as a prisoner on the way to Rome, Acts 27-28.]*
9. *a night and a day I have been in the deep; [see previous note.]*
10. *(26) In journeyings often, [Four major journeys recorded in Acts, plus many shorter trips.]*
11. *in perils of waters,*

12. *in perils of robbers,*
13. *in perils by mine own countrymen,*
14. *in perils by the heathen,*
15. *in perils in the city,*
16. *in perils in the wilderness,*
17. *in perils in the sea,*
18. *in perils among false brethren; [Which was the peril he is countering in Corinth.]*

#### **Personal hardship and discomfort**

19. *(27) In weariness and painfulness,.*
20. *in watchings often,*
21. *in hunger and thirst,*
22. *in fastings often,*
23. *in cold and nakedness.*
24. *(28) Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.*
25. *(29) Who is weak, and I am not weak?*
26. *who is offended, and I burn not?*

It was not enough that he endured so much in pursuit of winning souls for Christ and planting new local assemblies, he suffered perhaps more under the daily burden of the care of all the local assemblies. Certainly the Corinthians were behind no one in adding to THAT burden. He was not complaining, for it was his pleasure to shepherd Christ's own. But it was a rebuke to them that such anguish over them ever became necessary in the first place. But he takes their griefs upon himself as Christ did and does.

*29 Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?*

We each need to be ready with care and concern for the assembly, and the individual saints there. The weak are those referred to 1Corinthians 8-10. They are apt to be stumbled by selfish actions of the "strong." The house of Stephanas addicted themselves to the care of the assembly, 1Corinthians 16:15. We should too.

He finally cites an ignominious experience that occurred at the very beginning of his ministry shortly after his conversion. While a called Apostle of Jesus Christ he did not receive acclaim and a grand ceremonial departure from Damascus. Nor was it a miraculous angelic intervention as with Peter's release from prison. Paul escapes for his life by being let down by the disciples secretly at night outside the wall in a basket. What a contrast to the gorgeous robes and investitures used by those in high positions in professing Christendom today. The false apostles of Corinth were but forerunners of these usurpers of Christ's glory.

#### **If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities.**

And as he continues in chapter 12 he does so.