

THINGS THAT MIGHT HAVE MADE PAUL ASHAMED

“I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes” , (Rom 1:16)

At the time Paul dictated this letter to Rome he had recently been “shamefully entreated” at Phillipi (1 Thess. 2:2 KJV). A few weeks later he was chased out of Thessalonica and Berea (Acts 17:1 - 15). Next he was insulted at Athens as a “babbler” (Acts 17:18). After arriving in Corinth he was “opposed” and “abused” by Jews in the synagogue (Acts 18:6).

Even after all this, however, Paul was still not ashamed of the gospel!

Several years later Paul wrote to the Corinthians from Ephesus and described his similar circumstances with these graphic words: **“To this very hour we go hungry and thirsty, we are in rags, we are brutally treated, we are homeless. We work hard with our own hands. When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it; when we are slandered, we answer kindly. Up to this moment we have become the scum of the earth, the refuse of the world.” (1 Cor 4:11-13).**

His second letter to Corinth reveals the same sad circumstances: **“Rather, as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: in great endurance; in troubles, hardships and distresses; in beatings, imprisonments and riots; in hard work, sleepless nights and hunger; in purity, understanding, patience and kindness; in the Holy Spirit and in sincere love; in truthful speech and in the power of God; with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left; through glory and dishonor, bad report and good report; genuine, yet regarded as impostors; known, yet regarded as unknown; dying, and yet we live on; beaten, and yet not killed; sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything.” (2 Cor 6:4-10)**

Even after all this, however, Paul was still not ashamed of the gospel!

When comparing himself with false teachers Paul wrote: **“Are they servants of Christ? (I am out of my mind to talk like this.) I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches.” (2 Cor 11:23-29)**

Even after all this Paul, however, was still not ashamed of the gospel!

The creation, as you know, involves things “visible” and “invisible” (Col.1:16). Moses dared to leave Egypt because he saw Him Who is invisible (Heb. 11:27). Balaam’s ass altered his steps because he saw that which was invisible (Nu. 22:23). The servant of Elisha was emboldened when he saw the invisible army of God (2 Ki. 6:17). The thief on the cross entered paradise because he saw an invisible kingdom (Lk. 23:42, 43).

Paul was not ashamed of the gospel because his focus was on things eternal. He wrote: **“So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.” (2 Cor 4:18).** As the late Jim Elliott explained, “He is no fool who gives up the things he cannot keep, to gain the things he cannot lose”.