

## A VISIT TO THE 'BORDER LAND'



**TEXT:** **2 Cor. 1:8-11** *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: 9 But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: 10 Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver you Ye also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons thanks may be given by many on our behalf.*

**INTRO.:** A. Hezekiah is the prime example of someone brought to the brink of the **"BORDER LAND"** of death. After feeling the cold breath of the grim reaper on his soul he was led back to life for an additional 15 years.

**ILLUS.:** How many here have been to the "BORDER LAND"? You have had a close-to-death experience, and have felt the chill of coming that close to our *"last enemy"*?

B. Paul had taken several visits to **"BORDER LAND"** and here recounts his deliverance and tells how he dealt with it and what effect it had upon him. As we know from his statement in Phil.1:21, death held no fear for him by that time. He had learned from his **"VISIT TO THE 'BORDER LAND'"** that the One Who brought him back from the brink was able to raise him from the dead...

### **I. FACING DEATH: v.8,9a**

**ILLUS.:** Paul begins this epistle by informing the Corinthians concerning the comfort they would receive from the Lord during times of tribulation. Now he relates his own personal experience. He begins by speaking of *"our trouble which came to us in Asia..."* He could have been speaking of any number of specific events in his not-too-distant-past. For example, his persecution in Lystra where he was stoned, dragged outside the city & left for dead (Acts 14:6-20); the Bible says *"...as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up and came into the city, and the next day he departed w/Barnabas to Derbe."*

Or perhaps he had in mind the Demetrius disturbance in Acts 19 where he was compelled to leave Ephesus. Or maybe he is thinking of his having *"fought with beasts at Ephesus..."* Possibly he was referring to this entire group of calamities. In any event they or it had a profound impact on his life. He says he was...

#### A. *"Pressed Out of Measure..."*

1. This is superlative language expressing the severe trouble he is speaking of.
2. This is a trouble so great he found it difficult to find language to describe.

#### B. *"Above Strength..."*

1. This trouble is beyond human endurance; human resistance was inadequate to bear the load of this *"trouble"*.
2. He is saying that no human resource is available to help in this situation.

**ILLUS.:** Paul had been through many trials and had demonstrated unbelievable human strength & tolerance for pain & suffering. But whatever it was he had experienced in Asia was beyond any of those events. Only one seems to fit the description, i.e., his stoning at Lystra.

#### C. *"Despaired Even of Life..."*

1. It is not that Paul is afraid to die; rather that he knew his death would end his ministry.
2. Humanly speaking he knew there was no way out of this **"trouble."**

**ILLUS.:** Imagine what it would be like to be stoned to death! Dying by degrees. Every stone bringing you one step closer to death. Waiting on that fatal stone to the head or the one which would break your breast bone & crush your heart...!!!!!!

#### D. **"The Sentence of Death..."**

1. Paul knew that this particular **"trouble"** was his death knell; that his life & ministry was over.

**ILLUS.:** There will come a time when you too will take **"A VISIT TO THE 'BORDER LAND' "** and you may not come back! You had better be ready, i.e., you need to set your house in order, for sooner than you may think you may be faced w/a *'border land'* experience and have to face the Lord.

When Isaiah came to make a sick call on Hezekiah, what he told him was to "SET THINE HOUSE IN ORDER ; for thou shalt die and not live." Is.38:1 Hezekiah visited the **"border land"** but was allowed to come back from there for an additional 15 years. Hezekiah's response to the sentence of death was to turn his face to the wall & begin to pray in earnest!

Maybe your "sentence of death" will come via a heart attack, an ominous annmt. from the Dr., in old age (from which there is no reprieve), or thru chastening by God's hand as w/Hezekiah. Paul's "sentence of death" came because he WAS serving God!

2. **Apart from Divine intervention, there was no hope.**

## II. FINDING FAITH: v.9b,10

#### A. **"Not Trust In Ourselves..."**

1. Paul teaches us that we need to despair of our own power & trust in His.
2. God's power is the power **"which raiseth the dead...!"**

**ILLUS.:** Perhaps prior to this "trouble" Paul had a tendency to trust in his own strength & pain-tolerance. Maybe before he felt the fire, he thought he could walk alone. Someone said, *"God sometimes keeps us in the fiercely hot furnace until he sees us walking therein by the side of the Son of God (Dan.3:25)."* God must sometime shake us until He has shaken all the self-trust out of us. Someone else said: *"Self-confidence is poison; trial is intended to destroy that poison."*

#### B. **"We...Trust...He Will...Deliver Us..."**

1. Paul's assurance that the Lord will continue to deliver him (& us), is based on his past experience. **"Who delivered us from so great a death..."**
2. Faith is not some blind trust in nothing, but rather confident trust in something we can validate from past experience w/a faithful God.

## III. GIVING THANKS: V.11

#### A. **"Helping Together By Prayer..."**

1. Paul acknowledges the part the prayers of the saints contributed to his deliverance.
2. Of course, prayers beyond the will of God, will not prevail...otherwise Paul would no doubt be alive today!

#### B. **"Thanks May Be Given By Many..."**

1. Many had prayed for Paul, now thanks can be given for all who prayed.
2. Paul is saying "Don't forget to say thanks."

**ILLUS.:** It is both polite & appropriate to say thank you to the Lord when He answers our prayers. How rude we are sometimes when we storm the throne of grace in behalf of some pressing need, & then when God answers, we fail to come back & humbly thank Him.

**CONCL.:** If you haven't yet made **"A VISIT TO THE 'BORDER LAND' "** – YOU WILL! Thank God He is able to deliver you & bring you back from the brink. When your time comes you need two things: faith to trust the Lord and a thankful spirit.

