



# The Tri-Cities Edifier

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## Suffering for Christ

The apostle Paul wrote...

*"From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness—besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches." 2 Corinthians 11:24-28*

I simply cannot relate in any way to what the apostle Paul had to endure for preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ. (39 stripes x 5 = 195 stripes) I cannot imagine what one stripe feels like, not to mention one hundred and ninety-five. It wasn't administered by the Romans, it was administered by his Jewish family. That must have affected him emotionally. Beaten by the very people his heart's desire and prayer to God was for their own salvation. (Romans 10:1) What a hard prayer to pray but he did it and he meant it.

Upon three occasions Paul was beaten by rods. I have never been beaten once with rods to even be able to relate to three times. One time Paul was stoned. It doesn't feel good to be hit by one stone on accident let alone to be hit by many intentional stones because people are so angry with you. We know this took place in Lystra (Acts 14:19) and the stoning was so brutal the Jews believed Paul was dead. This also was at the hands of his brethren. To be the recipient of such hatred and anger, I simply cannot relate.

The other night, the headlights in the car went out while traveling home from Wednesday night services. The road in front of us immediately disappeared in darkness with no street lights along the mountain road. Can you imagine the suffering Paul experienced while spending a dark night floating around in deep waters after a shipwreck? He didn't experience one shipwreck but three shipwrecks.

The sufferings and dangers Paul experienced and endured were directly tied to his labors as an apostle of Jesus Christ.

The apostles John and Peter suffered for Christ and were happy to have been able to do so.

*So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. Acts 5:41*

While I have not been able to relate to the physical suffering that Paul endured, you and I are called upon to be ready to do so. To follow Christ is to suffer with Him.

**Romans 8:17** *and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.*

**2 Timothy 3:12** *"Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution."*

**Philippians 1:29** *For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake,*

**1 Peter 3:12-16** *FOR THE EYES OF THE LORD ARE ON THE RIGHTEOUS, AND HIS EARS ARE OPEN TO THEIR PRAYERS; BUT THE FACE OF THE LORD IS AGAINST THOSE WHO DO EVIL." And who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed. "AND DO NOT BE AFRAID OF THEIR THREATS, NOR BE TROUBLED." But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed.*

**1 Peter 4:19** *Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.*

I am not a prophet to foretell the will of God for the future but wickedness abounds in our country. People are becoming increasingly more violent against those who would identify evil and speak out against it. They are verbally assaulting those who would speak out against abortion, fornication, drunkenness, drugs and thievery. We need to be ready and willing to suffer for Christ. We need to be ready to stand for truth and avoid all evil. We need to be ready to be persecuted for the righteousness sake; we will be blessed in doing so. (Matthew 5:10)

Remember to suffer with Christ is to be glorified with Him. (Romans 8:17) So be steadfast brethren and endure any and all suffering that you meet for the cause of Christ. You are promised the crown of righteousness. (2 Timothy 4:8)

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## ***Simple Steps in the Plan of Salvation***

- by Greg Gwin

Through the years various analogies have been used by gospel preachers to represent the plan of salvation. Some have referred to it as rungs on a ladder, or steps in a stairway. One well remembered evangelist would frequently compare the plan of salvation to a combination lock. He would explain that each step had to be taken in the right order – just like entering the numbers on the combination lock – or success could not be achieved.

It seems that we've often gotten away from such simple preaching of the gospel fundamentals. God has made His plan so plain that folks with the most basic of reasoning abilities can understand it. Yet it seems that too often we've failed to really educate people with the most important and basic facts concerning their souls and eternity. We need to get back to those "first principles," and teach them in a way that can not be misunderstood.

And, in case you've forgotten, here is that "combination" for salvation ...

- Hear the word (Romans 10:17)
- Believe (Hebrews 11:6)
- Repent of sins (Luke 13:3)
- Confess faith in Jesus (Romans 10:10)
- Be baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38)

Every Christian should know this plan by heart and be ready to share it with others. And anyone who has not obeyed these simple steps needs to carefully study the scriptures and obey without further delay. It's God's plan - very simple - ultimately important!