

# There Once Was a Man ...

Chase Green

There once was a man who endure substantial difficulties for the Lord, both from the outside-in, and the inside-out. Do you know who he was?

This man:

- Played the referee with contentious brethren,
- Fed the brethren milk when he had hoped they would be ready for meat,
- Endured labor and revile and persecution and defamation of character,
- Desired to visit those who were puffed up and obstinate,
- Rebuked an egregious sinner who was puffed up and influencing others to sin as well,
- Begged his brethren not to go to court with one another,
- Answered difficult questions about marriage and food sacrificed to idols,
- Defended his apostleship to those who challenged his authority,
- Defended his rights to basic sustenance, marriage, forbearing secular work, and being paid a living wage,
- Took great care to take an interest in people of all kinds of backgrounds so that he could save as many as possible,
- Taught the Truth regarding women's roles in the church and the Lord's Supper,
- Rebuked an entire congregation for abusing spiritual (miraculous) gifts,
- Defended the resurrection of Jesus Christ,
- Had to deal with such terrible things as beatings (both stripes of whips as well as rods), prisons, deaths (of people he undoubtedly dearly loved), stonings, shipwreck, exhausting missionary journeys, all kinds of perils (including from his own countrymen and even brethren, albeit FALSE ones), weariness and painfulness of the flesh, the need to be ver-vigilant for the Truth, hunger and thirst, frequent fasting, cold weather and with that nakedness, and the continuous weight of caring for probably hundreds or more congregations of the church.

And I'm sure that doesn't even touch the hem of the garment! This person, of course, was the apostle Paul. See the following references: 1) 1 Cor. 1:10ff; 2) 3:2; 3) 4:13; 4) 4:18-19; 5) 5:1ff; 6) 6:1ff; 7) Chapters 7-8; 8) 9:1ff; 9) 9:4-14; 10) 9:19-23; 11) Chapter 11; 12) Chapters 12-14; 13) Chapter 15; 14) 2 Cor. 11:23-28.

Just how bad did Paul have it? We may never know. BUT ... Just how GOOD did Paul have it, too? Again, we may never know! The Bible is clear that the difficult things that Christians go through make us stronger, and ought to make us joyful, to suffer for the cause of Christ (See James 1:2-4).

What if, with every flaw that he had to correct, Paul gave up on the church a little more, and a little more? What if, after having to deal with everything at Corinth, Paul said, "Enough! I'm done with the church of our Lord!"? What if the afflictions and the turmoil and the hatred that Paul received from the outside had caused Paul to just plain give up?

I hate to even consider the very thought! What a shame it would be! But may it be the case that sometimes we let things (perhaps even trivial things) cause us to give up on the Lord and His church? May it never be so!

With love, Chase