

Even A Saint Isn't Without His Faults

“In labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods. Once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.” – 2Corinthians 11:23-27

My mom recently gave me an old, worn, yellowed newspaper article that was sent to a columnist by an individual in Albany, Oregon. The person was requesting a previous article that was sent many years prior recounting a meeting of church members who, in sorting out the applications from the many preachers who had applied to fill their vacant pulpit, found fault with every one. The article was originally sent by a preacher from the Union Church of Christ in Ludlow, Massachusetts. I include it here for your perusal and contemplation.

“One of the toughest tasks a church faces is choosing a good minister. A member of an official board undergoing the painful process finally lost patience. He had watched the Pastoral Relations Committee reject applicant after applicant for some fault, alleged or otherwise. It was time for a bit of soul-searching on the part of the committee. So he stood up and read a letter purporting to be from another applicant.”

‘Gentlemen: Understanding your pulpit is vacant, I should like to apply for the position. I have many qualifications. . . I have been a preacher with much success and also had some success as a writer. Some say I’m a good organizer. I’ve served as a leader most places I’ve been.

‘I’m over 50 years of age. I have never preached in one place for more than three years. In some places I have left town after my work has caused riots and disturbances. I must admit I have been in jail three or four times, but not because of any real wrongdoing. My health is not good, though I still get a great deal done. The churches I have preached in have been small, though located in several large cities. I have not got along with religious leaders in towns where I have preached. In fact, some have threatened me and even attacked me physically. I am not too good at keeping records. I have been known to forget whom I have baptized.

‘However, if you can use me, I shall do my best for you.’

The board member looked over the committee. “Well, what do you think? Shall we call him?”

The good church folks were aghast. Call an unhealthy, troublemaking, absent-minded ex-jailbird? Was the board member crazy? Who signed the application? Who had such colossal nerve?

The board member eyed them all keenly before he answered. “It’s signed, ‘The Apostle Paul.’”