

Saved to Serve (Studies in Second Corinthians)

by
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INTRODUCTION

Second Corinthians is the book to be studied by the Auxiliary in the year 1944 - 1945. At the request of the Assembly's Committee on Woman's Work, the material in this booklet has been prepared by Dr. Manford G. Gutzke to direct the women of the Church in the book-study of Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians.

It is important that this booklet be regarded only as a guide to the study of the Scripture text itself. The Scripture references should be read from the Bible and given careful consideration with the outline of each lesson at hand. Only after such personal study should the comments in this "guide-to-study" be read.

No attempt should be made by any group to undertake a study of this entire booklet at one meeting, nor would it be wise to try to give the five studies in less than five periods. There is plenty of material in each to occupy a full study period and there should be time between each lesson for personal study by the members of the group. The women should be encouraged to do personal study in preparation for each of the five lessons that appear in this series. "Preparation Questions for the Individual" on each lesson are given in the Guidebook for the Presbyterian Woman.

The study of Second Corinthians will be of increased value to those who store in their memory some of the choice verses from that book. A suggestion by the leader of the study that the class members memorize selected verses may be all that is needed to lead some individuals to discover the value of this method of Bible study.

Grateful appreciation is expressed to the author of these studies, which give a clear interpretation and implication of the truth presented in the Epistle of Second Corinthians, with its emphasis upon the salient fact that Christians are "Saved to Serve."

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OUTLINE OF CHAPTER ONE

CHRISTIANS ARE SAVED TO SERVE

I. The New Testament Epistles Were Written To Christians

1. Christians live by faith in Jesus Christ.
2. Every Christian has some grasp of the truth in Christ.
3. But Christians grow in grace and knowledge.
4. Christian growth and development is nurtured by other Christians.
5. Growing Christians are always in danger of being misled by "false teachers."
6. The latter half of the New Testament consists of epistles written to Christians.

II The Apostle Paul Wrote To The Corinthians

1. The Corinthian Christians were young converts from heathenism.
2. But this was a growing Church.
3. The Apostle Paul had established the Church in Corinth.
4. Paul wrote this epistle in a personal and intimate fashion.

III "Saved To Serve" is the Great Truth in II Corinthians

1. Each Christian is specially related to some one else.
2. God's way of bringing blessing is to use a person to help a person.
3. Every Christian is "Saved to Serve."
4. Mature Christians are specially called to help others.
5. It is important that Christians should realize they are "Saved to Serve."
6. Yet, serving must be learned.
7. Paul wrote II Corinthians by way of teaching this great truth.

STUDY QUESTIONS FOR CHAPTER ONE

CHRISTIANS ARE SAVED TO SERVE

Preparation Questions for the Individual, given in the *Guidebook for the Presbyterian Woman*

1. For a background knowledge of II Corinthians read Acts 18:1-17 and make note of the facts you learn about the Corinthian church. What is revealed of Paul's experience in Corinth?
2. Is it true that all of the New Testament Epistles are written to Christians? Read Romans 1:7, I Corinthians 1:2, II Corinthians 1:1, Galatians 1:2, Ephesians 1:1, Philippians 1:1, Colossians 1:2, I Thessalonians 1:1, II Thessalonians 1:1, I Timothy 1:2, II Timothy 1:2, Titus 1:4, Philemon 1:1-2, Hebrews 3:1, James 1:1-2, I Peter 1:1-2, II Peter 1:1, I John 2:1, 12-14; 5:13, II John 1:1, III John 1:1, Jude 1:1, The Revelation 1:1.
3. Why did Paul write his first epistle to the Corinthians? Read II Corinthians 1:23-2:9.

Additional Study Questions for the Leader

1. What does Peter advise Christians to do that they might grow?
I Peter 2:1-3
2. What must a Christian do to be sure he becomes fruitful?
II Peter 1:5-10
3. In what sense were the following "Saved to Serve"?
Joseph (Genesis 37:28, 36; 39:21-23; 41:14, 37-45, 52; 45:5-8; 50:20)
Moses (Exodus 2:1-10; 3:10)
The Little Captive Maid (II Kings 5:1-4, 14)
Joash (II Kings 11:1-3, 21)
Esther (Esther 2:16; 4:13-14; 5:3, 6; 7:3-4; 8:3, 7-8, 11, 15-17)
Daniel (Daniel 1:3, 8, 17; 6:23, 25-28)
Peter and the Apostles (Acts 5:19-20)
Paul (Acts 9:15-16; 22:14-15; 26:16-18 and 27:23-24)

CHAPTER ONE

CHRISTIANS ARE SAVED TO SERVE

I The New Testament Epistles Were Written To Christians

1. Christians live by faith in Jesus Christ according to the Word of God which they have heard and believed. They see and feel this world in the flesh, just as all other persons do. But they know this is not all. Through the revelation in Jesus Christ they know of another world; an invisible world of eternal, spiritual realities, in which God dwells and rules. They believe that world is just as real as this world, and far more important. Thus every Christian is conscious of two worlds. Christians live in this world in the flesh, but they live in such a way as to lay up their treasures in that world of heaven. They deal with men just as others do, but they also deal with God. They confess themselves to be "strangers and pilgrims on the earth" while by faith they look "for a city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." God has shown to them in His Word, both His promises and His power toward them in Jesus Christ. It is when they hear this Word of God, and receive it as true for themselves, that Christians have the faith whereby they live as children of God. Romans 10:8-17; Hebrews 11:8-16.

2. Every Christian has some grasp of the truth in Christ. He has heard that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ, the Son of the living God, and he believes it. He has heard that Christ Jesus died for his sins, that he might be forgiven and he believes it. He has heard that God raised up Jesus Christ from the dead, and placed Him at His own right hand, where He is living now and making intercession, and he believes it. He has heard that "this same Jesus shall so return in like manner as you have seen him go into heaven," and he believes it. He has heard that the Lord has sent the Holy Spirit into the hearts of believers, to comfort, to teach, and to lead them according to His Will, and he believes it. He has heard that it is the will of Christ Jesus that all those who put their trust in Him shall be raised from the dead, even as He was raised, and shall "forever be with the Lord," and he believes it. He rejoices in his deliverance from judgment, and in his assurance of eternal blessedness. He recognizes that he is not his own, that he has been bought with

a price, and that it is the will of God that he should serve as a member of the body of Christ. Not all these things may be equally clear in his mind, and he might not be able to outline what he does believe in just this way. But every Christian that knows the Gospel in the New Testament will recognize all this as setting forth the truth in Jesus Christ. I Corinthians 15:1-8.

3. But Christians grow in grace and knowledge, becoming more fruitful in their lives, and more useful in their service, as they increase in their understanding of what it means to live in Christ. Christian living must be learned. The Scriptures make it very plain that no one is just naturally a Christian: "Ye must be born again." It is likewise true that no born-again Christian just naturally knows how to live the new life in Christ. When a boy receives roller skates for a Christmas present he owns them truly enough, but he may not know how to use them. He must learn to skate, just as a baby must learn to walk, and talk, and act, etc. A Christian may know what the Scripture says about the will of God in Christ, and may believe it to be true with all his heart, and yet will need to learn just what that means in his own personal experience. The more he knows and understands, the more he can believe, the better he can serve in obedience to his Lord. The Apostle Peter urged Christians to "desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby." The Lord Jesus taught His disciples "Herein is my Father glorified that ye bear much fruit." It is the mature full-grown tree that bears fruit in abundance. Babies can be very sweet, but no one wants the child to remain a baby. Maturity, strength and skill are essential for service. In the Christian experience growth is directly related to the believer's grasp of the meaning of the Word of God in Christ. I Corinthians 3:1-3; I Peter 1:17-2:2; Hebrews 5:8, 12-14; John 15:1-8; II Peter 1:5-12.

4. Christian growth and development is nurtured by other Christians who minister the Gospel to their brethren according to their several personal gifts. Christians, who are young in faith and who do not know so much, learn from other Christians who are older in the Lord and who know more. For this reason God has equipped some Christians with the ability, and imbued them with the willingness to help others toward a better understanding and a stronger grasp of the truth in Christ. They are spoken of as "apostles, evangelists, pastors, and teachers." In our own time, our churches ordain some to be "ministers of the Gospel." These are called to devote all their strength and attention "continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the Word." Similar work is done by Church officers, Auxiliary workers, Sunday School teachers, parents, friends, etc., who are concerned for the spiritual well-being of other believers. Acts 20:28-30; Ephesians 4:11-16; Hebrews 13:7, 17; I Peter 5:1-4.

5. Growing Christians are always in danger of being misled by "false teachers." Some persons are flattered by the prestige of any place of leadership. It tickles their vanity to be "out in front." They are willing to pretend to a piety they do not have, and to subscribe to doctrines which they do not understand nor believe, in order to be counted as "leaders" in the Church. Most Christians only think as far as that someone should lead, and then are ready to accept most anybody as a leader who is willing to assume the responsibility and who seems to know what to do. And so it happens that "false teachers" are found in places of leadership among the Christians. Such persons are very jealous of their position, and do not hesitate to discredit all others, especially those who are sincerely honest in their ministry. Because they do not really believe what they profess, and often do not even understand what spiritual living means, they soon "bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them." Paul spoke of them as "grievous wolves" entering in among you, not sparing the flock." young and immature Christians readily follow others, and are easily deceived by the display put on by designing persons. For this reason a sober responsibility rests upon the true servants of God to protect the flock from the peril of "false teachers." It is when the believers are well-grounded in their grasp of the truth in Christ that they are safe from deception and error. Acts 20:29-31; Romans 16:17-18; I Corinthians 11:19; II Corinthians 11:3,13-15; Galatians 1:6-9; 2:4; Ephesians 4:14; Philippians 3:18-19; Colossians 2:8, 18; II Thessalonians 2:3, 9-12; 3:6, 11, 14; I Timothy 1:6-7, 19-20; 4:1; 6:3-5; II Timothy 2:16-18; 3:8,13; 4:3-4; Titus 1:10-16; 3:9-11; Hebrews 13:9; II Peter chapter 2; I John 4:1; II John 7:10-11; III John 9:10; Jude 4-19; N. B. Acts 8:9-24.

6. The latter half of the New Testament consists of epistles written to Christians, designed to increase their understanding and to strengthen their grasp of the truth in Christ. These messages aim to explain what it means to live in Christ; to correct errors in thinking; to expose and repudiate false notions that weaken faith; to exhort the believer to be diligent in appropriation, and intelligent in participation of the salvation in Christ; to comfort the believer by assuring him of the abundant grace of God for him. They do through the written page what these ministers would have done in person had they been able to address their brethren face to face. The fact that so much of the New Testament consists of such messages to persons who already were Christians, shows how important is this matter of growing "in grace and knowledge" in the life of a Christian.

II The Apostle Paul Wrote To The Corinthians

1. The Corinthian Christians were young converts from heathenism. They had been Christians for just a short time and had everything to learn about the Christian life. Because all their background was pagan, and they were still living in the midst of pagan relatives, neighbors and friends, there was always the danger that they would keep some of their old pagan notions, and thus fall short of being fully developed Christians. Then, too, they were beset by "false teachers," who pretended to be the real apostles of Christ. These men cast aspersion on the ministry of Paul and his company, thus undermining the confidence of the Corinthians in the authority of Paul, and weakening their grasp of the truth which Paul had preached. They greatly needed guidance in their experience that they might become established as a strong, fruitful Church to the glory of their Lord and Saviour. Acts 18:1-18,27-28; I Corinthians 2:1-5; 3:1-4; 6:9-11; II Corinthians 11:3-4, 12-15.

2. But this was a growing Church. Here lay their prospect of better things. They were ready and willing to change their ways in all humility and zeal. They really wanted to excel as Christians, and were eager to please in their obedience according to the instructions they received. They needed teaching and explanation. But above all they needed confidence in those who ministered to them, so that they should not be swept away by the unsound and untrue "false apostles" who had come among them and had questioned the authority and the authenticity of the true servants of God, who had won them to the Lord in the first place. By continuing in their diligent attention to the truth which Paul and his company preached and taught, they would grow into maturity as useful members of the body of Christ. II Corinthians 7:7-11.

3. The Apostle Paul had established the Church in Corinth by his own preaching and teaching. In due time he had gone elsewhere to preach the Gospel in as many other places as he possibly could. But he had not forgotten nor forsaken the Corinthian Christians. He continued to pray constantly for them. At times he found occasion to send fellow-workers to visit Corinth, not only that the Christians there might be strengthened and helped by the preaching and teaching of God's Word, but also that he might hear again by first hand report how things were going in the Church. He had always cherished the hope that he might return to minister to them yet more in the things of Christ. Though he was absent from them in body at the time of writing this" epistle, Paul was indeed very much with the Corinthians in Spirit, with a deep personal concern for the welfare of his former parishioners. I Corinthians 16:5-12; II Corinthians 1:15-16; 2:1-11; 7:6-7, 12-16; 8:6, 16-24; 10:13-16; 12:14-15.

4. Paul wrote this epistle in a personal and intimate fashion. The Corinthians knew him very well. They could feel the sincerity and the fitness of every reference he made to his own experience and his own affairs. He was more mature as a Christian, so they could learn much by considering his manner of life in the Lord. Then, too, he held a unique relation to them in that he had won them, and nurtured them, in the Lord. He belonged to them, and they belonged to him. God had used him as a means for their spiritual benefit before, and there was every reason to think he would do so again. I Corinthians 4:14-17; II Corinthians 1:6-14, 23-2:11; 3:1-3; 7:2-16; 9:1-5; 11:5-10; 12:11-15; 13:1-3.

III "Saved to Serve" is the Great Truth in II Corinthians

1. Each Christian is specially related to someone else. There will always be one or more other persons looking to him for guidance and instruction, waiting on him for encouragement or fellowship, or depending upon him for help and comfort. Paul had the Corinthians. Every mother and father has the children. Every Sunday School teacher has the pupils in that class. Every Church member has some friends in or out of the Church. Every Christian has neighbors and relatives, who look to that Christian, whom they know personally and intimately, for their ideas of the Gospel, of Christian living, and of God. Not that everything depends upon that Christian in himself. "It is God that worketh in you to will and to do of his good pleasure." But God uses the life and testimony of one Christian to advance and to help the spiritual experience of the other. I Corinthians 4:15-17; 11:1; II Corinthians 1:23-24; 3:2-3; 4:2, 5, 11-12; Galatians 4:12-19; I Timothy 1:2.

2. God's way of bringing blessing is to use a person to help a person. He sent His Son as a man to save men. Even so, God uses a Christian to win a Christian. And, he uses a Christian to help a Christian. Because this is true, a Christian's personal experience in living is not really his own. God is using him in the lives of others. "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained (prepared) that we should walk in them." God has one great purpose in Jesus Christ, viz., to bless all those who put their trust in Him. He used the Lord Jesus Himself in that purpose. And He plans to use the Body of Christ, the Church in all its members, in that same purpose; II Corinthians 4:5-12; 5:13, 18-21; Ephesians 2:10.

3. Every Christian is "saved to serve." Being a member of the Body of Christ each Christian is called to living service in obedience to the Great Head of the Church, the Lord Jesus Christ. He said of Himself: "I am among you as he that serveth." He said to His followers: "The servant is not greater than his master." On the last night He spent with His disciples before His crucifixion, He showed His will for them when He girded Himself with a towel and washed their feet as a servant. "For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you." A dramatic illustration of this same truth is set forth in the life of Esther. By the providence of God the young queen enjoyed a place of great privilege. Her uncle Mordecai pointed out that she must use her opportunity to serve her nation which stood in great peril. "And who knoweth but thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" This is the genius of the Gospel from the very first. God said to Abraham, "I will bless thee and make thee a blessing." Our Lord said to His disciples "As my Father hath sent me, so send I you." Zacharias, the godly father of John the Baptist, speaking of the salvation in Christ, said: "That he would grant unto us, that we, being delivered . . . , might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life." Luke 22:24-27; John 13:1-17; Esther, chapter 4; Genesis 12:2; John 20:21; 21:15- 22; Luke 1:71-75.

4. Mature Christians are specially called to help others in spiritual well-being. Believers who know the ways of the Lord have the opportunity and the responsibility to help other believers who do not know nor understand as much. All believers are fellow-members in the one Body of Christ. What happens to any one Christian affects all the other Christians, especially those who are near and dear in a personal way. In the Church, as among all companies of men, there are the stronger and the weaker, the mature and the immature, the spiritual and the carnal. Now, in the natural world, there is always a definite tendency for the stronger, the mature, the more capable, the more fortunate to withdraw from the weaker, the young, the incompetent, the less fortunate, and then to associate with each other that they might mutually enjoy and profit by the more advanced conduct, understanding and means of each other. But this is not the mind of Christ. Within the Body of Christ, "the strong shall bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please themselves." And so, mature, spiritually-minded Christians are led in the Spirit to concern themselves about the spiritual well-being and growth of the younger and weaker believers. It is to the glory of God that He blesses such concern and service in love to the actual benefit of those who need help. I Corinthe-

ans 12:25-27; Romans 15:1-2; 14:7-21; I Corinthians 8:9-13.

A wonderful example of this truth is that of Abraham in his relations with his nephew Lot. Though he deemed it wise to separate from his nephew to avoid unseemly quarrelling between their servants, Abraham did not forsake Lot to the consequences of his own foolish course. When Lot was taken as a prisoner of war, Abraham organized and led a successful rescuing expedition. Later when God revealed His purpose to destroy the wicked city of Sodom, Abraham engaged in a classic prayer of intercession. It was not possible that Sodom should be spared, but we read to the glory of God, "And it came to pass when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when he overthrew the cities in which Lot dwelt." What a challenge to faithfulness on the part of those who believe, on behalf of those whom they love! God remembered Abraham, and delivered Lot, in the day of his peril!! Genesis 13:5-13; 14:13-16; 18:16-33; 19:29.

5. It is important that Christians should realize they are "saved to serve." When we consider what this really means our hearts are hushed in solemn silence. The Church has always had faithful parents, faithful pastors, faithful teachers, faithful friends, who have spent themselves in loving concern for those whom they hold dear in their hearts. It is doubtless true that each single person that ever is in heaven, will be there because some other person cared, and prayed, and lived by faith in the living Lord. But there is a special urgency upon Christians at this moment when more people are in awful peril than ever before in our history. The vast program of total war bids fair to crowd spiritual considerations from minds and hearts. The momentum of open vice and flagrant sin mounts ever higher and higher. Our loved ones are in need of help. As this is being written, some of us live in sheltered places today, because some of them spent last night in the howling wilderness of violence and desolation. They need our help, not our criticism. If the consciousness of God, and all that is high and holy, should at times be crowded out of their lives, leaving them weak and helpless before temptation, we need not be surprised. But it is for us who can, to set ourselves to seek God's face on their behalf, exercising ourselves in faith and in faithfulness, that they may be blessed. "God forbid that I should sin in ceasing to pray for you." "If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death." I Samuel 12:23; I John 5:16; Exodus 32:30-34; Exodus 17:12.

6. Yet, serving must be learned. The disposition to serve is derived from the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. But the understanding of how to serve must be acquired in the usual way in which a Christian learns anything of spiritual truth. The whole truth of the grace of God is fully set forth in Scripture, and was perfectly manifested in Jesus Christ. But it is demonstrated again and again in every generation, to all men personally and individually, in the lives of those who believe and serve. "Our Gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake." God uses mature Christians as "examples to the flock," so that those who do not know, may see and understand the real meaning of the truth through the living of those who do know. Thus the plan of God in this follows the natural order, the younger learn to live in Christ from the way in which the older live their lives in Christ. I Thessalonians 1:5-7; I Timothy 4:12-16; Titus 2:7-8; Philippians 3:17; I Peter 5:3; Hebrews 5:8.

7. Paul wrote II Corinthians by way of teaching this great truth. When he wrote his first epistle to them, Paul was compelled to write in terms of correction because of the carnal blemishes which had developed in their immaturity. Upon their receipt of that letter, these Christians had seriously undertaken to remove those marks of childishness and to set themselves to achieving growth and maturity in spiritual things. Paul then wrote in this second epistle, which we are to study, of this great truth of serving, which belongs to mature Christian experience, that these beloved Corinthians might grow in this grace of Christ to the glory of His Name. Paul always considered himself as a case in point when it came to matters of living by faith. He did not hesitate to draw attention to what was happening in his own experience, by way of illustrating the will of God. They had seen him labor as a servant. Hence he does not shrink from dwell-

ing upon his own life in service among them that they might learn the real meaning of living in Christ. I Corinthians 3:1-4; 4:14; 5:2; 6:5-8; 11:17-22; II Corinthians 2:4; 7:8-11; 8:6-9; 12:12-19.

As we study this epistle we shall see an intimate personal testimony of a great Christian. But more than that, we shall see a clear exposition of the opportunity and the responsibility of every believer in Christ to serve others through his own spiritual experience. The Apostle taught the Corinthians in this epistle. The Holy Spirit will make this instruction vital and valid in our own experience as we humbly read and study. Let us "hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches."

OUTLINE OF CHAPTER TWO

THE SERVING CHRISTIAN AFFECTS OTHERS

(II Corinthians, Chapters 1-3)

I What Happens to Christians is Designed to Benefit Others

II Corinthians 1:3-7

1. Every Christian's personal experience enables him to help others.
2. Christians will have troubles.
3. But Christians will have consolations.
4. Living in Christ involves both sufferings and consolations.
5. Such living in Christ is useful to help the salvation of others.

II Paul Experienced Trouble and Despair but Trusted God

II Corinthians 1:8 - 2:13

1. In his great troubles Paul put his trust in God.
2. Paul's conscience was clear that he lived by the grace of God.
3. Paul planned his work in sincere dependence upon God.
4. Paul was mindful of the interests of others as he did his work.
5. Paul carried on in his work, even when his heart was heavy.

III But God Used Him as an Instrument in the Lives of Others

II Corinthians 2:14 - 3:18

1. God caused Paul to triumph in Christ despite his many troubles.
2. God used Paul as a savor of Christ among all men.
3. God made Paul an able minister of the New Testament.
4. Paul had implicit confidence in the power of the Gospel.
5. God used Paul's sincere conduct to produce the likeness of Christ.
6. This truth is a solemn and stirring challenge to every Christian.

STUDY QUESTIONS FOR CHAPTER TWO

THE SERVING CHRISTIAN AFFECTS OTHERS

II Corinthians. Chapters 1-3

Preparation Questions for the Individual, given in the *Guidebook for the Presbyterian Woman*

1. What good is there in suffering? See II Corinthians 1:3-7
2. What good came to Paul through his experiences in suffering? II Corinthians 1:8 -2:13.
3. Read II Corinthians 2:14 -3:18 listing the facts you learned about Paul, the writer of this Epistle.

Additional Study Questions for the Leader

1. In what way is the experience of parents, teachers, le directly helpful to those whom they lead?
2. What are some of the results which great troubles leave in a Christian's experience?
 - How will it affect the Christian's attitude toward others in trouble?
 - How will it affect the Christian's attitude toward God?
 - How will it help the Christian to help others?
3. What did the disciples learn in the day of trouble? Matthew 8:23-27.
4. Why did not Moses stay in Pharaoh's household to trouble? Hebrews 11:24-27.

CHAPTER TWO

THE SERVING CHRISTIAN AFFECTS OTHERS

II Corinthians, Chapters 1:3-7

1. What Happens to Christians is Designed to Benefit Others – II Corinthians 1:3-7.

1. Every Christian's personal experience enables him to help others. We do not live haphazard lives of luck and chance. Even though we cannot see the end from the beginning, and do not even know what a day may bring forth, God does know all things. We are in His hands. He watches over us in compassion, " And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God." In these opening verses of II Corinthians the apostle strikes the major chord of his whole epistle. God comforts us so that we can comfort others with the comfort we ourselves have received from Him. This gives added meaning to living. What you are going through now is not merely for your own sake. God is leading you through experiences and helping you in them, so that you in turn can be a help to someone else. It may be there is some one not as strong as you, who needs your help. You are living ahead of that one In pioneer fashion, as a parent goes before a child in a storm, breaking a trail along which that loved one may follow more safely and more surely. Romans 8:28; II Corinthians 1:3-4.

2. Christians will have troubles – not a matter of weather, or of hard times, or of physical sickness and hurt – the sort of trouble anyone has just by living in this world (he will have those in the Providence of God just like anybody else) – but the "sufferings of Christ," the kind of troubles that every believer has

by living in the Spirit. Such sufferings are experienced when one denies one's self: the giving up of personal pleasure, the meek acceptance of unkind treatment, the doing good when others are doing evil, the abstaining from indulgence of the flesh, the tolerating of unfair actions when people impose upon you since you will not fight for your rights, the inward pain when others practice sin and tempt your own loved ones to join them contrary to your own will, the strain of being steadfast when no one will stand by you – together with all the various forms of persecution which unbelieving and worldly people will exercise toward you because you want to be a real Christian. Such are the "sufferings of Christ" which come to every believer. This is Christ's own path, and it is ours (John 15:18-21). There is no other route.

"The way of the Cross leads home,
There's no other way but this."

3. But Christians will have consolations – not a matter of money, or of health, or of personal human advantage or fortune (although God in Providence may bless us richly in the things of this life, and that may be to our joy and His Glory), but the "consolation by Christ." Paul was counting on this consolation when he was eager to know "the fellowship of his sufferings." When Paul was alone in the night of abstinence upon the storm-driven ship the angel of God stood by him (Acts 27:23-25). When he was left alone in the Roman court, and all men forsook him, this was Paul's great consolation: "Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me" (II Timothy 4:16-17). We read of Moses that he chose "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; . . . for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward" (Hebrews 11:25-26). And of our Lord it is written, "Who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame" (Hebrews 12:2). The promises of God are rich and uniform: "if we suffer, we shall also reign with him" (I Timothy 2:12). "I will never leave thee." "I will be with thee in the day of trouble." (Note also Psalm 23, 91, etc.)

4. Living in Christ involves both sufferings and consolations. "The whole world lieth in the lap of the evil one." And it is in this world that we live our lives. The Lord was perfect, and spent Himself in doing good to all men, yet He could say "My soul is exceeding troubled, nigh unto death." Job was a righteous man, eager to please God, yet he was brought into a nightmare of calamity and suffering. The acme of suffering occurred on Golgotha's lonely hill. But that is not the whole story, thanks be to God! After Calvary came the Resurrection! After Affliction comes the Glory! After the Cross comes the Crown! This is the typical course of spiritual experience: sufferings and consolation, and in that order! The Glory in the Gospel is always in the Resurrection, "after death." This in itself would be enough to inspire us to be "faithful unto death" that we might receive "the crown of life," but there is yet another wonderful feature to this truth. II Corinthians 1:5.

5. Such living in Christ is useful to help the salvation of others. What is happening in our experience will matter in the life of some one else. Now we have a second reason for being faithful in Christ. Not only is it true that "if we suffer, we shall also reign," but in suffering faithfully we help others! The issues that arise in our own hearts, the battles fought within our own breasts, involve the fortunes of those whom we love. If we are defeated because of our lack of faith, they are hindered even if they do not know why. But if we are victorious by the grace of God, they are helped, even if they do not know why. This is a precious truth to those who care for others. This gives added meaning to the strain and the pain in the heart of the parent, the teacher, the pastor, the friend. The sufferings endured by a Christian in his own spiritual experience have a functional value in the lives of others. It is this that gives meaning to the struggles and victories in prayer. Many a soul is strong in the day of testing because someone who cares is faithful and believing in prayer. God works in us, and through us, and by us to the benefit of others. We all know what it is to spread our hands over the fire, and have our whole body warmed in the glow which is diffused through all the body from the hands: even so in the body of Christ, for "we are members one of another." II Corinthians 1:6-7; Romans 12:5.

II Paul Experienced Trouble and Despair but Trusted God – II Corinthians 1:8 - 2:13.

1. In his great troubles Paul put his trust in God. When he went into Asia he encountered such troubles that he simply could not endure them in his own strength. He thought he would die because of his experiences. But he was ready for this test. He did not even attempt to manage by himself. He put his trust in God who was able to raise the dead, and who could certainly deliver him in this extremity. Paul also remembered that the Corinthians were praying for him, so he committed himself confidently into the hands of God. Here is a simple pattern for us. When sufferings come it is so natural to look for some reason in the course we have taken. How often we are tempted to say we must have done something unwise or unnecessary, since now we are having trouble! (N. B. Matthew 16:21-23). Or we are haunted with the fear that this trouble is surely a punishment for something we have done wrong! It is the tragic experience of many an earnest soul to be burdened with a sense of personal responsibility for some sorrow or bereavement or loss, that has come in the providence of God. Yet all this is really a form of depending on one's own works. It is not the attitude of faith. Paul knew that God was able to deliver, just as he knew that he personally couldn't help himself in his predicament. So he put his trust in God, leaving the whole matter in God's hands by faith. II Corinthians 1:8-11.

2. Paul's conscience was clear that he lived by the grace of God. He knew that he was not planning and deciding his course of action in order to serve some selfish or willful purpose. Nor was he counting on his own "fleshly wisdom" to enable him to be successful because of shrewd calculating. He was living simply and sincerely as he was led in the will of the living God, and he was counting on "the grace of God" to enable him to endure by simply trusting God. No doubt this is a large factor in enabling anyone to trust God altogether in any given situation. As long as we plan our own affairs, we feel responsibility and of course in the day of trouble we bear the burden on our own hearts. Doubtless many are crushed under heavy and many burdens for this very reason: they are living in their own plans and counting on their own strength. This is not living in Christ, and such poor souls cannot have the strength that comes to those who are "simply trusting every day." The serving Christian, who trusts on the other hand, can rest quietly confident, while he moves in the world, not at his own pleasure, but in the will of God, helped by the grace of God. II Corinthians 1:12-14.

3. Paul planned his work in sincere dependence upon God. He had planned an itinerary of preaching that would take him to and from Corinth, where he expected to receive aid in his program. But this plan had not been made as a matter of calculation based upon his own judgment of the contingencies involved. He did not plan it that way because it looked easy, and he did not now change his plan because it looked hard. Actually he was led in all his plans by the Spirit of God who does not waver in His purpose to achieve the will of God in Christ, and Paul counted on God for the strength to do his part. The serving Christian need not plan his work according to his own wisdom or his own strength, but rather can look forward to doing what he is led to do, confident that God will strengthen him for whatever task is assigned to him. II Corinthians 1:15-22.

4. Paul was mindful of the interests of others as he did his work. This was in keeping with the Spirit of God given to guide him in his ministry. He changed his plan about visiting Corinth because he wanted the Corinthians to have gladness rather than sorrow from his visit. They had gotten into trouble as a congregation, so that if Paul had come to them at that time he would have had to straighten things out himself. That would have hurt some people's feelings, and would have spread tension and unhappiness throughout the Church. It would have suited him to come from his own standpoint, but it would have meant embarrassment and unhappiness to them. So he stayed away, and wrote them a letter instead, showing them what to do. Although he had been personally grieved by the wrong-doer in the Church, he held no grudge. Just as soon as the Church forgave the man, he personally would forgive him also. In fact he hoped the Church had already forgiven him, so that there would be no further danger of losing the man.

Christian discipline is always for welfare and never for punishment in itself. Paul knew that Satan finds opportunity to make trouble and to cause destruction whenever there is tension and estrangement between Christians. A church quarrel is the devil's picnic. Whatever personal feelings Paul may have had, he was willing to forget all about this, "lest Satan get an advantage of us." The serving Christian aims always to advance the welfare of others, regardless of self. II Corinthians 1:23 - 2:11.

5. Paul carried on in his work even when his heart was heavy. Even though he was ready to deny himself, Paul still had feelings as any other human being would have. It meant a great deal to him to have his beloved fellow-worker Titus with him as he went into strange places in preaching the Gospel. He expected to find Titus at Troas, and was very much disturbed when Titus could not be found. But, even though he was much cast down, and had no rest in his spirit, yet he pushed on into Macedonia to serve in the ministry of the Gospel. Such personal disappointment and grief is hard to endure, and places a great strain on the heart of the servant. But the serving Christian continues to "run the race that is set before him" by the grace of God which sustains him in his depression. How many persons are finding it so very hard to attend to their work today, because their hearts are heavy with loneliness, and longing for some absent loved one! Here is their road marked out before them. Forward to the new task, the new duty, with trust in God, even though the heart is aching and weary. II Corinthians 2:12-13; Hebrews 12:1.

III But God Used Him as an Instrument in the Lives of Others – II Corinthians 2:14 - 3:18.

1. God caused Paul to triumph in Christ despite his many troubles. Just what troubles any Christian may experience is known only in the secret counsel of God. Some will have more, some will have less. And anyone of us will have more or less from time to time. It is no sure sign of spiritual blessing either to have troubles or to be without them. But it is a clear witness to the favor of God if a Christian is kept and strengthened in the time of trouble. God does not so much take away our troubles, as He gives us grace to endure and to triumph over them. "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world," (John 16:33). Paul's troubles had been so severe he thought he would die, but God brought him through in victorious triumph. The serving Christian can look up and forward from the deepest depression in sorrow, with the assurance that God "always causes us to triumph in Christ Jesus." II Corinthians 2:14.

2. God used Paul as a savor of Christ among all men. There will always come the time when one good example is better than ten thousand words. Those who do not believe, may in the course of time become hardened to the words of preaching and the teaching of the Gospel, but they cannot remain indifferent to a concrete example of the truth in the life of some one in their own family, or their own neighborhood. This puts an awful responsibility upon every believer. At any time God may set the Christian as an example of the reality of the Gospel. And men will be affected for life and for death by the example of that believer. When a Christian is stricken with sorrow, or burdened with grief, men look to see "Is thy God able to deliver thee?" When the serving Christian is helped to triumph in the day of trouble, all other people who know him are influenced toward God by his testimony. II Corinthians 2:15-17.

3. God made Paul an able minister of the New Testament. The sufferings and consolations of the Christian are not in vain. God would have the world know that it is His will to raise from the dead unto eternal life all those who put their trust in Him. He has the power to do that very thing. His purpose and power were manifested in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and He calls all men to commit themselves unto Him in covenant relationship in Christ. But this message, this call, must be presented to men in an effectual manner. When God revealed the old covenant of the Law on Mt. Sinai He inscribed the Ten Words on tables of stone. But when God reveals the new covenant of His Grace in Christ Jesus, He inscribes His will in the "fleshy tables of the hearts" of His believers. He does this through the ministry

of Christians among men, using them as His tools for engraving the truth into the consciousness of other men. Paul found that as he personally suffered and triumphed in his obedient faithfulness to His Lord, God was using him effectually to bring others to understanding and faith. II Corinthians 3:1-6.

4. Paul had implicit confidence in the power of the Gospel. From the Old Testament record he learned that the law given by Moses had power to affect men's lives for a time. Since the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ was designed to affect men for eternity, Paul was sure that it would produce even more glorious results than the Law had produced. In this confidence he witnessed to all men with boldness and frankness. He had nothing to hide, so he lived his life openly before men that they might see the things of Christ in his life. "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth," (Romans 1:16). The serving Christian does not hesitate to let the world know his faith in Christ, because he is "fully persuaded that what God has promised He is able also to perform," (Romans 4:21). II Corinthians 3:7-11.

5. God used Paul's sincere conduct to produce the likeness of Christ. It is one of the functions of the Holy Spirit to transform believers into the image of Jesus Christ to the glory of God. This is done as they behold openly and honestly the glory of the Lord. Some one has said "It is the look that saves, but it is the gaze that sanctifies." The truth of Christ is to be read in the Scriptures, but it is to be seen in the lives of sincere Christians. There is a real sense in which every Christian is a personal edition of the truth of the Gospel "known and read of all men." But for men to read the message clearly the type must be plain and vivid. For this reason Paul deliberately set himself to show a frank plain testimony in his own life. The serving Christian is thus inspired to live his faith openly and boldly so that others looking at him may not miss the truth which he believes. II Corinthians 3:12-18.

6. This truth is a solemn and stirring challenge to every Christian. God plans to use each one of us for the benefit of others. He overrules in our lives to lead us through the experiences in which we may serve others by being faithful in our own affairs. Every Christian is walking on parade. We need not seek some great place of service. God will use us where we are, and will move us to that other place when He wants us there. But wherever we are the issue is the same. Will we sincerely and honestly live openly before others according to our faith? Are we willing that God should use us? Then let us be quiet and wait on Him. He will use us. He will control all things so that we are in the spot where our lives count with others. In order to show His power He will lead us into situations which are too hard for us in our own strength, and He will let us face problems too difficult for us in our own wisdom. But He will bring us through by His grace, and will teach others by what is happening to us. Then let us be strong in faith. "It is given unto you, not only to believe on him, but to suffer for His name's sake," (Philippians 1:29). And He will make our experience count in the lives of those whom we love and all to whom we witness of His power.

OUTLINE OF CHAPTER THREE

THE SERVING CHRISTIAN IS STRENGTHENED TO ENDURE

II Corinthians, Chapters 4-5

I The Serving Christian is Strengthened by Realizing His Mission

II Corinthians 4:1-6

1. The Christian is the only messenger of the Gospel to all men.

2. Apart from Christ all men are lost and blinded.
3. The Christian does have the light of the Gospel in his own heart.

II The Serving Christian is Strengthened by Understanding His Experience

II Corinthians 4:7-15

1. The Christian's own life shows the weakness of man and the power of God.
2. The Christian is a walking, living demonstration of the Gospel.
3. The Christian passes through such experiences for the benefit of others.

III The Serving Christian is Strengthened by Considering Eternal Things

II Corinthians 4:16- 5:8

1. Suffering as a human being is not hard when one looks at the eternal consequences.
2. The Christian always has the assurance of living in the world to come.
3. Death in the flesh here will lead to life in heaven there.

IV The Serving Christian is Strengthened by Expecting to Meet Christ

II Corinthians 5:9-13

1. The expectation of meeting Christ face to face is a real incentive.
2. What men do on earth will really matter in heaven.
3. The Christian is eager to affect men for their own benefit.

V The Serving Christian is Strengthened by Remembering the Work of Christ During His Earthly Life

II Corinthians 5:14-21

1. Christ Jesus gave Himself unto death that men might live.
2. Living in Christ means having a new outlook.
3. The Christian deals with all men as an Ambassador of Christ.

STUDY QUESTIONS FOR CHAPTER THREE

THE SERVING CHRISTIAN IS STRENGTHENED TO ENDURE

II Corinthians, Chapters 4-5

Preparation Questions for the Individual, given in the *Guidebook for the Presbyterian Woman*

1. Why should the Christian feel a compulsion about giving the Gospel to others? II Corinthians 4:1-15.
2. What encouragement is there for Christian serving in II Corinthians 4:16- 5:13?
3. Why did Paul direct the attention of the Corinthians unto Christ and His experiences? See II Corinthians 5:9-21.

Additional Study Questions for the Leader

1. Read II Kings 7:1-16. Why did the lepers feel their responsibility? (II Kings 7:9).
2. Read Genesis 28:10-22. What difference did it make to Jacob when he realized that God in heaven intended to help him and to do him good?
3. Read Ezekiel 3:18-21 and 33:1-6. What is the responsibility of a watchman?
4. Read Matthew 16:19 and John 20:23. How important does it seem to be for a Christian to give his testimony in the Gospel to others?
5. Read Matthew 25:31-46. Also Matthew 10:32-33. What is it that makes our life here on earth so important?

CHAPTER THREE

THE SERVING CHRISTIAN IS STRENGTHENED TO ENDURE

II Corinthians, Chapters 4-5

It has been noted in the preceding chapter that the course of Christian living includes personal suffering, which is used of God to bring benefit to others. Even though such sufferings thus become really a means of blessing to others, they are nevertheless also very real as sufferings to the Christian. In this chapter we shall see that the Christian is helped to bear these burdens, to endure these sufferings by deriving strength from the knowledge of what his life means in the plan of God.

I The Serving Christian is Strengthened by Realizing His Mission – II Corinthians 4:1-6.

1. The Christian is the only messenger of the Gospel to all men. Christ "verily took not on him the nature of angels," when He came to seek and to save the lost, (Hebrews 2:14-16). Nor did He commit the preaching of the Gospel into the hands of angels. But He did lay the Great Commission on the hearts and into the hands of men and women who had personally believed and entered into the salvation which He brought. It is the will of God that all men shall know of the Gospel, and to that end He has sent these Christians to the ends of the earth to preach and to teach. Paul realized such was his task. So he undertook to do it openly, honestly, genuinely in order that men might be led in confidence to believe the Gospel to be true. If the world will not believe the Christian, it will never receive the Gospel. For this reason the serving Christian is particularly anxious that his conduct shall appear genuine and sincere, so that men may believe. If such open honesty should bring on suffering, the serving Christian will not falter since he is in the place where the salvation of others depends on the faithfulness of his ministry. II Corinthians 4: 1-3.

2. Apart from Christ all men are lost and blinded. It does not change matters to say that men do not admit they are lost. Perhaps no one is ever as really lost as when he thinks he is on the right way and isn't. It is enough for the Christian that he knows they are lost. But men are not only lost, they are actually blinded by the glare of the things of this world so that they cannot see the things of Christ. Because this is true, it is often necessary that the Gospel must not only be presented in word to the intellect; it must also be presented in personal experience in a way that can be seen and felt. What men cannot understand in the

words, they may come to feel in the deeds of the Christian. In this particular context it is not so much the deeds of the Christian in what he may do just to help others, but it is what the Christian does in living his own life. The people of the world can see the troubles which come to the Christian, and they get impressions of the Gospel truth from observing how the Christian lives in the time of trouble.

II Corinthians 4:4-5.

3. The Christian does have the light of the Gospel in his own heart. Paul had lived in the darkness of his own heart before he came to know Christ, and his memory of it was that he was inwardly "without form and void. And darkness was upon the face of the deep," (Genesis 1:2). But the same God who said "Let there be light" at the creation of the world, had now sent forth light into the chaotic and empty heart of Saul the Pharisee. The light that shined on the Damascus road was symbolic as well as real. That light shone from the face of the risen Christ, so that Saul cried out "Who art Thou, Lord?" and from the moment the answer came "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest," that light forever illuminated Paul's soul. And not only that, but through Paul the light shined forth far and wide in his ministry, (Acts 22:6-15). The serving Christian is a light-bearer, a burning torch to lead others to God. It is what the Christian knows of Christ in his own soul, that he can pass on to others. "Such as I have, give I unto thee," (Acts 3:6).

II Corinthians 4:6.

When the Christian realizes that he and he alone has the light that can bring blessing to others, he is inspired and energized to serve whatever may be the cost.

II The Serving Christian is Strengthened by Understanding His Experience – II Corinthians 4:7-15.

1. The Christian's own life shows the weakness of man and the power of God. Christians are men of "like passions" as other men, (James 5:17). The sun is just as hot, and the water just as wet to a Christian as to anybody else. Personal injustice, careless unkindness, malicious criticism, unfair opposition hurt a Christian just as keenly as such things would hurt others, perhaps even more so. Disappointment, discouragement, distress weigh as heavily in the Christian's heart as they: would in anyone else. And yet there is a difference. In himself he is just that human and limited. But he does not live in himself. Men die in their weakness, but it is the great glory of the Gospel that God raises the dead. Christians live in the power of God, not in themselves. Which is to say that Christians will "always triumph in Christ." But God leads them along a route in which this pattern of dying and living is continually repeated. The dying of the flesh, the sufferings, show forth human weakness: the triumph in the Spirit, the consolations, show forth the power of God. II Corinthians 4:7-10.

2. The Christian is a walking, living, demonstration of the Gospel. God overrules in the life of a Christian to lead him through sufferings which hurt and are the pangs of death. Then He delivers him by His grace, which brings consolation and is the joy of life. We may well recall here that such sufferings are not to be conceived so much as being all the natural sufferings arising from our human predicament: the troubles of the butcher, the baker and the candle-stick maker; but rather such sufferings as are particularly related to the Christian's witness of Christ, to his testimony of his faith in Christ. In any event they are sufferings that are significant to others, to the unbelieving community in which the Christian lives. As others see the "dying to live" experiences of the Christian they are actually led in the way of living by faith, of life eternal. II Corinthians 4:11-12.

3. The Christian passes through such experiences for the benefit of others. It is his confidence of the purpose of God to work "all things together for good" (Romans 8:28), that strengthens the Christian in his boldness to witness and to testify of his own faith in Christ. He may know that when he identifies himself before others as a believer in Christ, he becomes "a case in point," a "walking demonstration" for the benefit of others. And yet he will be bold to speak out as a believer, because he has implicit faith in

God's purpose to "raise him up" in triumph. Also he realizes that others seeing the truth demonstrated, will be brought to faith, to share in the resurrection to the glory of God. What happens to him is helpful in the winning of others. The more souls won to Christ will mean the more glory to His name. It is when the Christian understands that his experience is actually helpful in the saving of souls, that he is strong and ready to bear whatever sufferings God may assign to him in His wise providence. II Corinthians 4:13-15.

III The Serving Christian is Strengthened by Considering Eternal Things – II Corinthians 4:16-5:9.

1. Suffering as a human being is not hard when one looks at the eternal consequences. The trials endured by the Christian do wear away his human strength. Christian women can be exhausted physically and mentally by the strains and cares which they may be called to bear in the Providence of God. But the believer grows stronger and stronger with each new victory of faith. Not only is the Christian strengthened by the triumphs which are experienced here even in this life; but as faith becomes stronger, the eternal things become more sure, and more precious. The Christian knows that heaven is real and that God is true. And he soon finds strength for each new trial here on earth by considering what is involved in eternal things. It is so much more important to have eternal joys, that a Christian learns to count the troubles and the burdens of this earthly life as something short and light. By keeping in mind the realities of God and heaven the Christian is made strong to endure "as seeing him who is invisible," (Hebrews 11:27). II Corinthians 4:16-18.

2. The Christian always has the assurance of living in the world to come. The troubles we experience in Christian living make us think of death. Some times we feel that we simply cannot hold out any longer. The burden, the strain, the long waiting, is just more than we can stand. When everything seems to go against spiritual things, and we can see no change for the better in all that we care about, we may even feel that we would be glad to go to be "with Christ which is far better," (Philippians 1:23). We know we live here only for a time. Some day, it may be soon, our time here will be over. Our confidence is fixed in the promise of God to prepare for us a dwelling place, (John 14:1-3). We may not be so sure of what will happen to us here, but we can be quite sure about what will happen there: "we shall be like him for we shall see him as he is," (I John 3:2). The history of missions, as of countless unknown personal experiences in private life, is marked by this common record, that Christians have again and again been strengthened to serve in suffering, because they were not afraid to die. "They looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God," (Hebrews 11:10). II Corinthians 5:1-5.

3. Death in the flesh here will lead to life in heaven there. And this is the consolation of the believer in any aspect of life where it may be considered. When bandits in China marvelled at John Vinson's peaceful calm in the face of death, they asked in astonishment: "Are you not afraid?" To which our martyred missionary gave his stirring and famous reply: "Afraid of what? Afraid of death! I believe that the moment in which you kill my body here, I shall be standing there in the presence of my Lord, the King." So it was with Paul in prison as he wrote to the Philippian Christians: "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain . . . For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and to be with Christ; which is far better," (Philippians 1:21-23). There was no doubt in Paul's mind, but that "absent from the body" meant "present with the Lord," and this kept Paul willing to die at any time. The serving Christian is not dismayed at the possibility of losing things or even life itself, since he has been assured that the living Lord will always be ready and willing to bless him with all grace out of His bountiful riches in glory, and should he die, the Lord will promptly take him to himself in glory with joy forever. The Christian has the assurance of ultimate triumph confirmed in his own soul, and moves forward in serving with suffering, strong in the strength which God gives to him. II Corinthians 5:6-8.

IV The Serving Christian is Strengthened by Expecting to Meet Christ – II Corinthians 5:9-13.

1. The expectation of meeting Christ face to face is a real incentive. This truth is directly related to, and follows immediately upon, that which we have been considering above. Not only is the Christian assured that he will live again in heaven, but he expects to see his Lord "face to face." This hope has the profoundest influence in Christian experience. Wayward Christians are brought to heartbroken repentance by looking into His face. Burdened Christians are marvelously helped by His Presence. "They looked unto him, and were radiant," (Psalm 34:5). Serving Christians are inspired with the ambition to be well-pleasing in His sight. It was so with Paul in this context. This became the guiding ambition of his zealous active career: viz., "Ambitious to be well-pleasing unto him." The serving Christian is greatly strengthened in his readiness to serve in life or death by the hope of meeting His Lord in person. II Corinthians 5:9.

2. What men do on earth will really matter in heaven. This adds weight to the effect of expecting to meet Christ. Christians will not only see Him, but in that same experience they will see the consequence of their earthly lives. Every man will stand before God in judgment. God's judgment will be fair and sure according to what man has done on earth. Nothing else will be introduced. Nothing will be omitted. What men do here will count forever. Doubtless there is much done in weakness, in carelessness, in ignorance. But serving the Lord can be done in sincerity, in genuineness, in simple faith. And that done on earth, will stand up in the judgment. That will count in heaven. The serving Christian is strengthened by such simple truth to exercise himself to the fullest extent of his ability in living honestly by faith in Christ. II Corinthians 5:10-11.

3. The Christian is eager to affect men for their own benefit before God in the day of judgment. He is impressed not only with what it will mean to himself when he stands before his Lord face to face, but he is deeply stirred by the thought of what it may mean to others when they stand before God. Other men may forget or ignore the prospect of facing God, but the Christian, knows it is true for the other man as well as for himself. He expects to meet God, and he knows that they will meet God. God will judge him, and that gives him incentive to serve; but God will also judge them, and that affects him deeply. Paul does not write this way because he wants any special commendation. In fact he does not shrink from making personal reference to himself even if in so doing he puts himself at a disadvantage. He wants to help them. And every phase of his ministry is deliberately designed to advance their spiritual welfare. They are to be judged, and he wants them to be blessed in the day of judgment. The serving Christian is profoundly affected by his own hope of meeting Christ face to face, and is deeply moved to desire the benefit of others in the sight of God as he looks forward to that day of judgment for them. II Corinthians 5:12-13.

V The Serving Christian is Strengthened by Remembering the Work of Christ During His Earthly Life – II Corinthians 5:14-21

1. Christ Jesus gave Himself unto death that men might live. The life of Christ Jesus has been studied to discover many eminent principles of living, and to enhance many notions of morals, ethics, values, ideals. But no one need ever wonder what the New Testament writers conceived to be the most important aspect of the earthly career of Jesus Christ. He was seen as the Lamb slain from "the foundation of the world" (I Peter 1:20), "the Lamb of God" (John 1:29), and even now He is spoken of as the one "who loveth us" and "gave himself for us," (Galatians 2:20). He came to give Himself "a ransom for many," (Mark 10:43-45). John 3:16 remains the true statement of the Gospel in a single sentence. Paul draws two conclusions from the love of Christ manifested on Calvary: first that men must need salvation or Christ would not have died to provide it; and, second, that believers who are saved by the death of

Christ ought to yield their redeemed souls to the Lord Christ in loving service rather than to live their own lives in selfish interest. "Ye are not your own, ye have been bought with a price," (I Corinthians 6:19-20). Both these considerations strengthened Paul in his own service. As the serving Christian considers what Christ Jesus has done at the cost of suffering unto death for the benefit of others, he is inwardly moved to commit himself to the same course of service as the Lord may direct. II Corinthians 5:14-15.

2. Living in Christ means having an entirely new outlook upon all other persons. Men amount to something in the esteem of other men, of society. So we have rich and poor, learned and ignorant, skilful and clumsy, prominent and obscure, of high estate and low estate. But this is actually "knowing" them, recognizing them, "after the flesh." Paul writes to say that, as a serving Christian he does not esteem men in the way, i. e., as they may be rated in the community. Living in Christ gives one the outlook which God has upon all men. God sees men as those for whom Christ died. God is ready to receive men while setting aside their sins and trespasses. He will deal directly with them, forgiving them for Christ's sake. He is waiting now for them to come to Him that He may deal with them in mercy and grace. So from God's point of view all men are called to come, (I Timothy 2:4). Some come and some don't come. This is the particular aspect in their lives that matters to God. Living in Christ gives one that outlook on other human beings. Not, how are they esteemed in the community; but, have they accepted Christ as their Saviour? The serving Christian has this outlook upon, and attitude toward, all men, with primary concern for their spiritual well-being; and is strengthened in it by remembering this is the outlook which Christ had. II Corinthians 5:16-17.

3. The Christian deals with all men as an Ambassador of Christ. Men may affect the Christian personally in various ways. The believer might like one man and not like another, simply for personal reasons. The believer may count some people as more desirable in a social way, due to his own upbringing and training. There may be no end of possibilities in the Christian's own esteem of others, but he does not act according to his own ideas or feelings. He is serving as an Ambassador of Christ. He sees men as those for whom Christ died. God loves all men, and so the Christian treats each person with consideration and courtesy. Yes, even more, he extends to each person the loving earnest concern which God has for all men in Jesus Christ. When~ he remembers how Christ Jesus gave His own life that he might win men to God, the serving Christian is strengthened to endure such suffering as may come to him in the course of his ministry to all men, while he faithfully seeks to win them as he serves in the name of his Lord. II Corinthians 5:18-21.

OUTLINE OF CHAPTER FOUR

THE SERVING CHRISTIAN MAY BECOME MORE FRUITFUL

II Corinthians Chapters 6-9

Every Christian is given grace to serve, but some never amount to anything in service.

I The Serving Christian Becomes More Effectual in Consecration

II Corinthians 6:3- 7:1

1. The way a Christian lives has much to do with the force of what he says.

2. Worldly things must go out before God will come into the heart.

II The Serving Christian Becomes More Consecrated in Obedience

II Corinthians 7:2-16

1. The Christian may need to be criticized for careless conduct.
2. The serving Christian profits by criticism because he is ready to repent.

III The Serving Christian Becomes More Blessed in Liberality

II Corinthians Chapters 8-9

1. Christians can be liberal even when they are poor.
2. It is actual performance that really counts in giving.
3. The example of giving liberally is good for everybody.
4. But actually giving in itself leads to more blessing in the giver.

STUDY QUESTIONS FOR CHAPTER FOUR

THE SERVING CHRISTIAN.MAY GROW IN FRUITFULNESS

II Corinthians, Chapters 6 - 9

Preparation Questions for the Individual, given in the *Guidebook for the Presbyterian Woman*.

1. What influence has the life on what one says? What is the heart appeal of II Corinthians 6:1 - 7:1?
2. What profit can there be in criticism? How should the Christian regard criticism?
See II Corinthians 7:2-16.
3. List everything good that will result from Christian giving as suggested in II Corinthians, Chapters 8 and 9. Why did Paul urge the Corinthians to give?

Additional Study Questions for the Leader

1. Read Acts 2:41-47. Why would these Christians have "favor with all the people"? Is there any connection between the favor of all of the people," and the fact that "the Lord added to the church daily"?
2. Read Acts 11:24. What connection is there between the first statement and the last statement in this verse?
3. Read Acts 5:1-5. What was the sin of Ananias? See verse 4, last clause.
4. Read John 15:1-8. What does the gardener do to the fruit trees to cause them to bear more fruit and better fruit? Note verse 2.
5. Read I Peter 3:1-6. How does a Christian woman win unbelievers to Christ? ("Conversation" means "manner of life" or "way of living.")
6. Read I Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-11. Is personal character and reputation important for Church

officers? Read also Titus 2:1-15.

7. Read James 4:4. Why should "friendship with the world" be so offensive to God?

8. Read Matthew 6:19-24 and Luke 16:1-13. Can you see how the unjust steward used his opportunity to provide for his future? How can a Christian use money to his own spiritual advantage?

CHAPTER FOUR

THE SERVING CHRISTIAN MAY BECOME MORE FRUITFUL

II Corinthians, Chapters 6 - 9

Every believer in Jesus Christ is given grace to serve both God and man, as a coworker with God. God has supplied the conditions under which the farmer raises his crops, but results depend in large measure upon the initiative and the diligence of the farmer in cultivation. This situation is seen on every hand. Everything essential to living has been provided, but men live more or less successfully according to what they do and how they do it. Even so in spiritual living. Every Christian is given the grace of God to guide him and to enable him in the will of God to act in ways that will bring results for himself and for others. But it is a sad and solemn fact that some Christians are never prosperous nor effective in their Christian lives. They have received the grace of God, since they were believers, but it has been in vain. No good has resulted. However such an unhappy ending need not be. Christians can become more and more fruitful. This portion of II Corinthians we shall now study, sets forth several conditions which will make the life of any Christian more successful in spiritual experience.

I The Serving Christian Becomes More Effectual in Consecration – II Corinthians 6:3 - 7:1.

In this discussion Paul had himself in mind as example. He knew from personal experience just what was involved in living a consecrated life, and he did not hesitate to refer to himself in writing to the Corinthians.

1. The way a Christian lives has much to do with the force of what he says. A real Christian is a godly person. We are all ready to esteem the Christian whose life is beautiful in holiness. But we may not realize so clearly that holiness in living, consecration in conduct, is most important in the effect a Christian has upon others. Actions speak louder than words. No where is this more true than in matters of religion. People can tolerate a great deal of incompetence, ignorance, and even such blemishes as vanity and indolence, but they will not tolerate insincerity. Ministers may be admired as great preachers, but they are loved for being good men. Even the sharpest critic of the Church will not fail to appreciate honesty and integrity. II Corinthians 6:3.

It is true that the serving Christian is beset with many trials and difficulties. He is only human yet men expect him to be perfect. He gets very little encouragement, and often no help, rather even opposition, yet he is expected to carry on faithfully, and not to falter in his service. People seldom praise the serving Christian. They often criticize, falsely accuse, and condemn him for what they do not understand. Yet the Christian must not quit, nor take offense, nor be resentful. He must not complain. He must stand the test by way of proving the reality of the Gospel which he professes. II Corinthians 6:4-10.

When the serving Christian proves himself and is faithful in sincere, honest behavior, other people grow and prosper in their faith. It is a great blessing to a congregation and to the whole community if the preacher is a good man, and the preacher's wife is a good woman. In the same way the personal lives of the elders, the deacons, the Sunday School teachers, the Auxiliary workers, the choir members, really matter to the congregation and to the community. Paul could describe his manner of life in a remarkable passage which indicates complete and constant consecration, and then cry out to the Corinthians that if their lives were not affected for their good in spiritual things, it was not his fault. They were certainly not hampered in their spiritual development by any slackness on his part. His life had been high-lighted for them in faithful consecration. If the Corinthians were being hindered in any way it was a matter of their own emotions and affections. They were still attached to too many other things and other people. Holy living is the source of fruitfulness both for personal blessedness and for the benefit of others. (I Timothy 3:1-13; II Timothy 2:1-4; 3:10-12; Titus 1:5-3:14; Philemon 1:7). II Corinthians 6:4-12.

2. Worldly things must go out before God will come in. Many persons seem to find it difficult to realize this truth. To be sure all men were born into this world first, and in their natural interests men can become very attached and addicted to things and to thrills in this world. But Christians are born again into an- other world. That other world is different from this world. "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would," (Galatians 5:17). It is most important to recognize this difference, and to make a distinction in one's own conduct where God has put a difference in things. Not everything is acceptable to God. Not every activity of society is tolerable to God. Some things are clean: some are unclean. It is the will of God that His people put a difference between the clean and the unclean, the holy and the profane, (Leviticus 10:10; 20:22-26). The ability to make distinctions is the essence of intelligence. This is preeminently true in spiritual experience. Any Christian that wants God to come into his heart and life more and more, must be willing to "turn away from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven," (I Thessalonians 1:9-10). II Corinthians 6:14-16.

Separation is always involved in consecration. And separation from worldly things comes first. There need be no confusion as to what this will mean. Men are either for God or not for God. If they are not for God, they should be not for the Christian. There are things that appeal to our appetites; natural things that we like to think about because we like them; and things that please us because we think they will make us proud of ourselves, which may not be pleasing to God. Such things must be set aside. The Scriptures speak of those who are "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God," (II Timothy 3:4). Such persons can never have the blessing of God, (James 4:14). How different it is with those who will turn away from anything and everything else to let God have first place in the heart and mind! "God is not ashamed to be called their God," (Hebrews 11:16). The big block of marble that is to be put in the wall as a great door post, was once in the natural hillside where it was formed. Before it was ready for the wall, it had to be cut out of the quarry. It had to be separated from its natural bed of rock before it could be fashioned and fitted into the wall, where it is to serve an important purpose. Even so with the serving Christian. He must be separated, like Abraham of old, away from his home, his family, his friends, in order that he might be consecrated unto God, and the work to which God will call him, (Matthew 10:34-39). II Corinthians 6:17-18.

Such separation must be largely a matter of one's own decision. In the last analysis God will not force a man to live contrary to that man's own will and intention, (Psalm 106:15). Precious promises are made by God to whosoever will turn to Him, and are designed to encourage persons to come to God. God's invitation and offer of salvation is full and free: "Whosoever will may come." "Whosoever cometh, I will in no wise cast out." (Read Revelation 22:17.) This is true when a soul comes to Christ to be saved from sin. It is also true whenever a believer comes to Christ to serve Him. "Here am I, send me," (Isaiah 6:8). And it is true when any believing heart turns to God to seek His favor. The serving Christian who

wants to enter closer and closer in personal fellowship with his Lord, by separating from worldly things, must make up his own mind to do so, and act accordingly. II Corinthians 7:1.

II The Serving Christian Becomes More Consecrated in Obedience – II Corinthians 7:2-16.

In this portion of his epistle, Paul uses the example of the Corinthians themselves to enforce his argument. They had passed through a season of heart-searching brought on by an earlier epistle from Paul, in which they changed their ways in obedience to the will of God. It had been a great joy to Paul when Titus told him how the Corinthians had so earnestly repented from their unworthy practices. What he had heard emboldened him to emphasize this aspect of growing in consecration.

1. The Christian may need to be criticized for careless conduct. Some Christians do not know how to act, how to live in Christ. They grew up in their homes and communities like all the other people around them, and learned the conduct-patterns of that community, According to their background and training they think one way is good, another is bad: this is right, and that is wrong. When they receive Christ as Saviour, and now want to please God, they set out to do what they think is good and right. Without realizing it, many Christians simply aim to be good and to do right, according to what they have been brought up to think. If they have been trained after a godly manner, the weakness of their attempt to live up to some accepted standard is not so easily seen. But if they have been brought up in worldly, and self-indulgent customs, this weakness stands out in glaring fashion. They may be conducting themselves in a manner that seems all right to them, but which may nevertheless be very inadequate as Christians, (Proverbs 16:2). As the old saying goes: such persons mean well, but are not right bright! But not only so. Some Christians may know well enough what to do, yet be in such a low state spiritually, be such children in matters of faith and responsibility, that they just carelessly don't do what they should do; and so, of course, do much they should not do. Such persons need to be told. Someone must take responsibility to pass on to them a frank appraisal of their conduct, with suggestions for improvement. This does not mean that such criticism need be malicious or unkind. Paul wrote very frankly to the Corinthians in his former epistle, criticizing their conduct sharply. But he did not do this because he wanted to condemn them. As a matter of fact they were very dear to the Apostle, who cherished them in his heart with an everlasting love. He wrote to them because he loved them, and wanted them to be delivered from anything which hindered and impaired the Gospel. Some Christians will never realize the unworthiness of their own conduct, until some one else, who does realize it, will tell them about it. (Read Titus 1:12-16; I Corinthians 5:6-13.) II Corinthians 7:8.

Anyone who criticizes another for that one's benefit must really love that person to do it faithfully. Criticism is so liable to be misunderstood. The person being criticized can so easily feel that the criticism is really evidence that the critic does not like him. Then, too, criticism can often hurt the wrong-doers feelings, even though it is admitted that the criticism is warranted. No matter how careless and foolish some persons may be, they do not want anyone else bringing it to their attention, and they will consider that anyone doing so is really meddling with other people's business, These considerations are enough to discourage anyone from offering criticism for the benefit of others. Only those who really care for the welfare of others will face the risk of such reactions. "Faithful are the wounds of a friend," (Proverbs 27:6). II Corinthians 2:4.

2. The serving Christian profits by criticism because he is ready to repent. Paul had written his letter of correction to the Corinthians with much misgiving, being fearful of how they might take it. He had even regretted sending it. But he was filled with joy when Titus came back from Corinth to tell him how the Christians there had acted in response to that letter. They had taken it right to themselves as Paul had wanted them to do. Instead of being offended at Paul for writing such criticism, they checked up on

their own conduct to see if they deserved it. When they saw that they did deserve it, they immediately took pains to change their ways. "In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter." This is the Christian way of receiving criticism. When a person believes in Jesus Christ as his Saviour, and is counting on the Lord to forgive him, to cleanse him, and to keep him forever, he has in himself a deep desire to be well-pleasing in the sight of God. Such a person has no great pride in himself, and, knowing he is a sinner by nature, he is not surprised that in his own way of doing things, he may have fallen short. His eagerness to please God and to serve Him is so strong, that when it is brought to his attention that his conduct is not what it should be as a Christian, his first response is to promptly change his ways. II Corinthians 7:8-11.

Paul had written to the Corinthians, criticizing their conduct, because he loved them so much. He wanted them to be real Christians in their conduct, so that they might grow spiritually and have the joy of serving Christ acceptably. He was not so much concerned with what was amiss in their behavior, as he was anxious that they should develop into being fruitful Christians in their own lives. Paul had been so happy and confident of the genuine faith in this Church that he had talked about them to others, including Titus. When he heard about their wrong-doing, he was deeply concerned in fear that they might fail to develop into fruitful servants of Christ, and he was uneasy in the fear that they would resent any word from him that would look like judgment of their conduct. Nevertheless he wrote because he knew that was the thing for him to do, and he also knew that if their hearts were right in the sight of God, they would accept the word of exhortation from him. When Titus came to report how they had received his message, and how they had promptly and earnestly obeyed, Paul's joy was beyond all bounds. He knew then from this evidence that his beloved congregation in Corinth was truly growing in consecration and would therefore become more and more fruitful in spiritual things to the glory of God. II Corinthians 7:12-16.

In this way the consecration of any Christian is definitely advanced. When he is brought to see the inconsistencies in his own behavior, the discrepancies in his conduct as compared with his conviction, the Christian can then judge himself. He can decide to change his ways; to deny himself in things that he used to enjoy, to separate himself from social activities which brought him personal pleasure, and to commit himself to a program that may include that which is unpleasant to his own feelings, (I Corinthians 11:31). When he does all this for Christ's sake, "God is not unrighteous to forget his labor of love," (Hebrews 6:10). The Lord Himself will come in close personal communion and reveal Himself to His servant to fill his heart with joy. The result will be more and more fruit unto holiness in that believer's life, (Hebrews 3:12-14; 4:1, 11, 16; 6:11-12; 10:35-39).

III The Serving Christian Becomes More Blessed in Liberality – II Corinthians, Chapters 8-9.

Here Paul presents the record of the Macedonian Christians as an inspiring example to stimulate liberality in giving. This is the third phase of the great truth in this lesson; viz., that the serving Christian may become more fruitful and more useful as a Christian. The three aspects presented follow each other in natural order. (1) Growth in effectiveness as a Christian witnessing to others is a matter of personal separation from selfish and worldly contacts unto consecration in personal fellowship with God. For this, Paul sets himself forth as an example. He knew how it worked in himself, and he could write about it, (II Corinthians Chapter 6). (2) Growth in consecration is a matter of obedience to God's will in changing practices and conduct as the result of self-examination and discipline. In this discussion Paul takes the Corinthians as an example of what he had in mind. He wanted them to know that he recognized the meaning of their conduct, and to assure them that they were on the right way to more and more success in spiritual living, (II Corinthians Chapter 7). (3) Growth in personal blessedness is a matter of faithful stewardship in what a man has received. The Macedonian churches had just given a remarkable demon-

stration in their liberal gifts to the poor. Their action was widely known and Paul used it here to stimulate the Corinthians, and to encourage them to develop this grace through the practice of it in all their spiritual experience, (II Corinthians Chapters 8-9). This completes a remarkable analysis of what is involved in the growth and development of a serving Christian.

1. Christians can be liberal even when they are poor. It was so with the churches in Macedonia. They were very poor, and beset with great trouble, and yet they gave very liberally in great joy. They gave as much as they could. In fact, Paul gives his own opinion that they gave more than they really could afford to give, out of their own free will. They graciously begged Paul to take their gift with him and give it to the poor Christians where he was going. Paul was happy to report that they had done even better than he expected, because they first intelligently gave themselves unto the Lord, and then they gave their money to Paul as something they wanted to do in the will of God. Paul was so impressed with this evidence of their spiritual growth, that he wanted his beloved Corinthians to "abound in this grace also." The serving Christian will grow in grace as he practices giving to the poor as "unto the Lord."
II Corinthians 8:1-9.

2. It is actual performance that really counts. It is not unusual for Christians to want to give, but sometimes Christians fail to give even though they are minded to. It is a common snare to feel that one cannot give enough to make it worthwhile, and so just not give at all. This hinders spiritual growth. The Scriptures teach us that God's measure for man's benevolence is man's ability. The Lord Jesus commended the poor widow, not because she gave two mites, but because she gave all that she had, (Luke 21:1-4). It is the proportion that counts. God looks upon the heart. God accepts what man gives according to what the man has, and how much he wants to give. But the man should give something. He should give what he can. If he does not give because he thinks he has so little, that man has not understood God's will and also has not advanced his own spiritual state. It is the doing of it, that counts: not the amount of it. The serving Christian will actually give as he can, knowing that such action is pleasing and useful to God.
II Corinthians 8:10-15.

3. The example of giving liberally is good for everybody. It is a form of evidence that everyone can understand. The Corinthian church had decided a year before to send a gift in charity to the poor, and Paul had told Christians about it everywhere he had gone. Other Christians had been inspired to act by the story Paul told. Now that the missionary party was due to come by way of Corinth on their journey back to Jerusalem, Paul was so anxious that the Corinthian gift might be ready when they came by, that he sent messengers ahead to urge them to get the money together before he came. Paul felt that the example of prompt, willing, liberal giving would be good for everybody. The serving Christian will give promptly, willingly, liberally and openly for all to see, with the thought in mind that the example may stir others to give to their own spiritual benefit. II Corinthians 8:16- 9:5.

4. But actually giving in itself leads to more blessing for the giver. The influence of his example is helpful to others, but the giving Christian receives the greater benefit in his own soul. There is a very simple principle at work here. The more a Christian gives, the more he will get. "To everyone that bath shall be given," (Matthew 25:29). Blessing flows through the Christian. God gives to the Christian to give to others. If the Christian closes down his giving to a mere trickle, then only a trickle can come to him. It is the Christian who gives all in service, who always has everything he needs. "God is able to make all grace abound unto you." Water that runs into a pool which has no outlet, becomes stagnant, breeding disease. Water running into a pool that has an outlet, so that the water goes through, remains pure and palatable. Christians that receive benefits but never give to others, tend to turn sour and develop various hurtful attitudes and ideas. But the serving Christian who gives liberally and freely according to what he has received, will grow in grace and in usefulness before God. Living in Christ means giving to others in the name of Christ. II Corinthians 9:6-15.

OUTLINE OF CHAPTER FIVE

THE SERVING CHRISTIAN IS WHOLLY COMMITTED IN SERVICE

II Corinthians Chapters 10 - 13

I The Serving Christian is Spiritual in His Procedure

II Corinthians 10:1-6

II The Serving Christian is Humble, but Deliberate and Determined

II Corinthians 10:7-18

III The Serving Christian is Aware of the Peril of Deception

II Corinthians 11:1-15

IV The Serving Christian is Ready to be Compared with Others

II Corinthians 11:16-29

V The Serving Christian is Worthy Because of His Sufferings

II Corinthians 11:30 - 12:7

VI The Serving Christian is Confident in the Grace of God

II Corinthians 12:8-13

VII The Serving Christian is Eager to Serve for the Benefit of Others

II Corinthians 12:14 - 13:14

STUDY QUESTIONS FOR CHAPTER FIVE

THE SERVING CHRISTIAN IS WHOLLY COMMITTED IN SERVICE

II Corinthians Chapters 10-13

Preparation Questions for the Individual, given in the *Guidebook for the Presbyterian Woman*

1. What does Paul point out to be the strength of the Christian in Chapter 10?
2. What do you learn of the experiences of Paul in the service of Christ from Chapters 11 and 12? In what did he glory?
3. Read II Corinthians 13 to know what is revealed about Christ; also list the appeals to Christians in this chapter.

Additional Study Questions for the Leader

1. Read Romans 12:1. What is the "reasonable service" every believer should "render to God"?
2. Read II Timothy 2:24-26. Why should the servant of the Lord be meek?
3. Read Numbers 12:1-3. What characteristic of Moses seemed to invite free range of criticism against him?
4. Read Matthew 11:16-19. What does this passage show about the soundness of the criticism that comes from unresponsive hearts?
5. Read Romans 16:18 and II Peter 2:18. What seems to be one characteristic of false leaders in religious matters?
6. Read III John, verses 9-10. What was the prominent characteristic in Diotrephes?
7. Read Psalm 37:1-11. What does the Lord say about our fretting about wicked men?
8. Read I Thessalonians 2:4-12. Note how Paul was gentle as a nurse and comforting as a father, even while he labored night and day, to present the Gospel "without charge."

CHAPTER FIVE

THE SERVING CHRISTIAN IS WHOLLY COMMITTED IN SERVICE

II Corinthians Chapters 10 - 13

As we come to this final portion of study of II Corinthians we have the last four chapters in the epistle as our Scripture for the truth we shall consider. This section of Paul's letter is most personal at the same time it is most earnest in tone. The focus of attention is referred again to Paul himself. He is in himself the living demonstration of the grace of God in a consecrated believer. He is the eminent Christian, just as he is the serving Christian in full maturity. But Paul takes no credit to himself for this. "By the grace of God I am what I am." What we have in Paul is the very sort of grace that will be given to each Christian who is willing to serve. Some will have more, and some will have less capacity; but all will be what they are, simply because "it is God that worketh in you to will and to do of His good pleasure," (Philippians 2:13). The power is from God. The only part the serving Christian plays is to yield to God's leading, while trusting in God's grace. Thus Paul could again present his personal testimony and know in his own heart that what he was writing was both true and fitting, as a presentation of the life in Christ lived in service to God for the benefit of others. Paul is the example from which we may learn. Our own experience may not include all that happened to him, but any serving Christian will find the same grace available which enabled Paul to serve so well.

I The Serving Christian is Spiritual in His Procedure – II Corinthians 10:1-6.

The Christian approaches other people in the name of Jesus Christ He looks upon all persons as those for whom Christ died. He deals with them as he feels led to think that Christ would deal with them. Thus he is meek in taking no offense, and gentle in giving no hurt to others. He has no disposition to be harsh or domineering in manner. This mildness should not be misunderstood. The Christian is not mild

because he is afraid, nor because he is in any sense inferior in his ability. He is not dealing with men according to the flesh. It is not a battle of wits, nor of intellectual cleverness, nor of personal strength. The real conflict is in the Spirit. The serving Christian has no direct conflict in the spiritual realm. He is matching the strength and wisdom of his faith over against the human thoughts and wishes of men. In dealing with other people as human beings the Christian may seem to be very weak and inconsequential, because he is pursuing no purpose among men as such. However if and where spiritual matters are involved the Christian will be found ready to engage in any sort of issue in an unyielding fashion. II Corinthians 10:3, 5, 6.

This is a matter of foregoing personal satisfaction in order to achieve spiritual victory. The Christian simply refuses to become involved with other men in any race for prestige, power or place in this world. Such efforts use up strength and cause fruitless trouble. It is sometimes hard to bear to have people low-rate the Christian because the Christian is not concerned for worldly position, but such is the price which the serving Christian pays in order to be free to devote time and strength to spiritual concerns. The Christian works along in the invisible realm of the Spiritual, and so must serve without the inspiration of dramatic events. The serving Christian lives this way because he is entirely committed to the Lord, and is concerned primarily that the cause of the Gospel should prosper.

II The Serving Christian is Humble, but Deliberate and Determined – II Corinthians 10:7-18.

No greater mistake could be made than to think that because the Christian is humble, therefore he is weak and uncertain. While Paul made no great show in the flesh and went about as a meek and gentle character, he was by no means to be lightly esteemed. The serving Christian has in mind that he belongs to Christ, and is in the community as Christ's agent. He has an authority and power in spiritual things that directly affects the lives of others for good. He may not seem very impressive compared to other men who have public relations, but he has strength to get things done. II Corinthians 10:7-9.

The Christian is not interested in his status among other men, as to whether he is some great one compared to the others. The human practice of comparing ourselves with ourselves, to arrive at opinions of our own greatness, is not wise. It does not matter so much how I compare with some other man. It does matter how I stand with God. God assigned certain tasks to be done, certain service to be rendered. Whatever that assignment is, marks the status of the servant, (I Corinthians 3:5). Each man has his own place before God. Each has his own rating before God, (Romans 14:4). A Christian does not even judge himself, knowing that God is his judge, (I Corinthians 4:3). He looks to God for help, and gives God the glory for anything done through his own activities. He desires above all else that he may be approved of God, (I Corinthians 3:21; 4:7). II Corinthians 10:10-13.

Because these things are so, the Christian is humble among men. He displays no zeal in competition with others. No one knows how far he could go, or how well he might do, if he were minded to seek recognition and esteem from man. Nevertheless, where he does stand and what he does do, is a matter between himself and God. Any attempt to push him around, or to hinder him in his work, will reveal an unexpected strength and determination. II Corinthians 10:14-18.

III The Serving Christian is Aware of the Peril of Deception – II Corinthians 11:1-15.

There is always the danger that others will be fooled as to who is really serving God. Young Christians especially are liable to mistake the humility and the lowliness of a true Christian as evidence of weakness, while they may think that those who put on a show of their religion are the real Christians. Thus they could be misled as to the true nature of the life in Christ. Since the younger Christians are still

learning the truth in Christ, they naturally look to some one to teach them and to lead them. The danger lies in the fact that everyone decides in himself whom he will follow, whom he will heed. There is the possibility that, due to his own lack of experience, the young Christian may prefer the teacher who is more impressive in outward show. II Corinthians 11:1-3.

Such danger had developed in Corinth. Certain persons had come to the Corinthian church, who claimed to be ministers of the Gospel, but who were not sincere. These were putting the impression into the minds of the Christians there, that since Paul was such a humble and unassuming man, he must be a rather inconsequential person. Now actually Paul conducted himself as he did that the people might learn the real truth. Genuine sincerity is the mark of a true believer. Christ himself took on the form of a servant, in order that men might be lifted and brought to God. Paul's conduct was in that pattern. It was a gross misrepresentation for anyone to insinuate that such procedure was due to a low grade of spiritual life. II Corinthians 11:4-6.

At the time Paul came to Corinth he refused to accept any pay at all for his ministry. This was done because of certain other religious leaders in the community at the time who made a great point of the fact that they were preaching without accepting any remuneration. Paul had matched them in his own procedure, financing himself in Corinth with what other churches elsewhere sent to him. But now there were those who intimated that Paul could not be very important as servant of Christ if he had to preach for nothing. Furthermore Paul used the common language of the average man in his public address, making no display of his great learning for the very reason that he wanted the people to know that living in Christ was not a matter of human wisdom, but of the power of God (I Corinthians 2:1-5). Now there were those who suggested to the Corinthians that Paul was probably an inferior minister since he did act so unimpressively. II Corinthians 11:7-12.

This is the very danger that often develops in a church or in a family. The real genuine Christian who wants to really help, lives among others on their level, and is willing to take the lowest place as a servant in order to help them. His humble manner is part of his procedure in the Lord, but it can be misrepresented by those who are ambitious to be counted great by reason of the show they make. There can be no question but that the preacher who presents his message in simple language is better understood and thus makes the greater contribution to the people. Yet it is a matter of common experience that the more impressive display of oratory is often esteemed by the public as being evidence of the greater preacher. "Did you hear the visiting preacher?" "Oh, yes! He was wonderful. I couldn't understand a word he said." How often a faithful parent earnestly entering into the menial tasks of the home, is chagrined and alarmed to see the children enamored by some other person in fine dress and fastidious manner! The children begin to imitate the words and ways, and to highly esteem the ideas, of persons who have done nothing for them, and who care less, but who are held up as being great because they put on a fine show! II Corinthians 11:13-15.

IV The Serving Christian is Ready to be Compared with Others – II Corinthians 11:16-29.

The true Christian has no fear of facing comparison with others who appear more impressive. However, it is distasteful to the Christian to put himself on parade. What he did, he did as unto the Lord; and it is embarrassing now to refer to his record by way of comparison with others. Nevertheless he is ready to do it, and does not fear the outcome. It is not really the way the Christian would be led in the Lord. But since his authenticity as a Christian has been questioned on the ground that he doesn't amount to much, the serving Christian will not shrink from personal comparison. II Corinthians 11:16-21.

When Paul presented himself in comparison to those who insinuated that he was inferior as a leader, he was able to present the most impressive record of service in Christian history. While he felt like

a fool when talking about what he had done, his report showed he had been no fool in service. This is not just the sort of comparison his opponents would want. They based their claim to superiority on fine words and fair speeches. They wanted to be esteemed for what they appeared to be. Paul met their pretensions by this blunt challenge to compare the record of service. He could confidently abide by the verdict. He knew that he was "not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles" in the matter of authority. But when it came to comparison of service, his zeal had carried him far beyond the achievements of any. II Corinthians 11:22-28.

Here lies the strength of the testimony of the serving Christian. Handsome is as handsome does, runs the old proverb. The serving Christian actually does so much in service for others, that in the day when younger Christians are in any confusion as to which is the true servant of Christ, the record will show in no uncertain way. The work done by a sincere Christian is not in vain. It not only serves the purpose for which it was done at the time, but it remains as evidence that will serve to guide the judgment of others in days to come. II Corinthians 11:29.

V The Serving Christian is Worthy Because of his Sufferings – II Corinthians 11:30 - 12:7.

Even though his record of service was so impressive, Paul himself felt that it was his sufferings that entitled him to glory as a Christian. What had been done outwardly was not as significant to Paul, as what he had endured inwardly. He had suffered indignities to his person, and infirmities in his body. Paul had spiritual experiences in receiving revelation from God that were unspeakably glorious, but he did not offer that as ground for esteeming him personally. However he had also endured infirmities in his body, a thorn in the flesh, and this was something that he felt entitled him to be favorably received. II Corinthians 11:30 - 12:5.

If a Christian servant were to count on his spiritual experiences in receiving revelation and blessing from the Lord as the basis of his worth as a Christian," he would become proud and vain. There is always something unhealthy when Christians offer their understanding of the Bible as the basis for our estimation of them as brethren. But a Christian can humbly offer the record of his deeds, and more especially what he has personally suffered, without any harm. There is something so chastening in real suffering that one can refer to it without the danger of developing hurtful pride. II Corinthians 12:6.

So here we are brought again to the theme of suffering in service, with which Paul opened this epistle. In previous studies we noted that suffering in service was used to the benefit of others. Here we see that sufferings are the ground for personal worth as a servant. The more worthy Christians are those who have suffered more. Esteem given to Christians because they suffer in service does not make them vain. Rather such recognition is a tribute to the grace of God. Christians endure sufferings by the grace of God, and when they are esteemed for their service despite their infirmities, the glory belongs to God, who has enabled them by His grace. II Corinthians 12:7.

VI The Serving Christian is Confident in the Grace of God – II Corinthians 12:8-13.

The experience of Paul would seem to imply that suffering is in the plan of God for the serving Christian. Some suffering will originate in the world outside, since men do not understand nor appreciate the things of Christ. Some suffering will arise because of false brethren who oppose the true servant and threaten to undo his work in the hearts of younger persons. But some suffering will be experienced in the Providence of God in personal infirmities. As though trouble from the outside world in circumstances, persecutions, and oppositions, were not enough, the Christian will be called upon to bear personal weak-

ness, sickness, and distress. There can be no doubt that such is what God plans for the Christian. Paul knew that God could heal the body and overrule in personal affairs, and he prayed earnestly that he might be delivered from the "thorn in the flesh." It is not known just what this "thorn in the flesh" was, and it is not important to know. Sufficient for us is the fact that it hurt and that Paul longed to be free from it. It is significant to us that the Lord left it there on purpose. II Corinthians 12:8-9.

Perhaps we should pause to reflect a bit more on this revelation of the plan of God for us. Probably every Christian has had a similar experience in prayer. Some sharp infirmity or irritating trouble may have been taken to the Lord in prayer, with no relief. There need be no shaking in the Christian's confidence and faith. There need be only understanding of God's purpose. It is quite proper" to ask God for relief from pain and trouble, and doubtless often the petition will be granted. But sometimes God will not remove our trouble, because we need that to keep us humble and dependent upon Him. Then let us not fret if God does not take away what is bothering us. When we have prayed, let us leave the matter in His hands. He knows and will do what is best for us. II Corinthians 12:7-9.

But the Christian is not left to suffer in his own strength. God will give him grace to enable him to bear the sufferings and to go on in service. "My grace is sufficient for thee." "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able" (I Corinthians 10:13). This is the pattern of service in the Lord. The Christian faces a task beyond his strength, but God will help him to serve as he should. The glory of the success and the triumph will then belong to Jesus Christ. For this reason Paul got to the place where he really was glad about his sufferings, since they were used to magnify the name of his Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, (Romans 5:3-5). II Corinthians 12:10-13.

VII The Serving Christian is Eager to Serve for the Benefit of Others – II Corinthians 12:14 - 13:14.

Even though he had trouble from the outside, pain from within himself, and his standing as an apostle had been questioned by men who wanted to take the leadership of the Church, Paul was eager to serve the Corinthians yet more. It would have been only right that he should have been commended, instead of being challenged and questioned. But this treatment did not discourage Paul, even though it distressed him. He was ready to come again, and to serve them the best he could, though he knew there was a chance he would not be appreciated. He was not planning to change his procedure. He had served humbly among them to win them, and he was not going to act differently now. Nor was he going to apologize for his manner. What he had done, he had done for their sakes; and he was ready to do it again, and for the same reason. II Corinthians 12:14-19.

Paul was somewhat fearful that this third visit to Corinth might not be as happy as he had hoped it would be. He had no intention of backing down before those who were casting aspersions upon him and his work. He had been mild and gentle among them and had been happy to show forth the meekness of Christ. But if it became necessary for him to judge them in the authority he had as an apostle, he was ready to do that too. He was neither afraid nor ashamed to face any man in the Gospel. He hoped and prayed that he would not have to be stern, but he was ready to demonstrate his authority if that were necessary. II Corinthians 12:20 - 13:4.

Paul's one great desire was that the Corinthians might grow into maturity as full-fledged Christians to the glory of God. To this end he suffered, and labored, and prayed. He had no personal interest to be counted as anything great. He really did not care what men might think of him personally. But he did want the Corinthians to prosper. And he knew they would if they would avoid evil, live honestly, and remember that Christ was living in them. II Corinthians 13:5-9.

This presents to us a wonderful picture of the serving Christian in his eagerness to serve for the benefit of others. No matter how much he has suffered, or how little he has been appreciated, the serving

Christian is ready to serve again. There is no thought of personal gain, no fear of personal pain, if only others can be helped. This is nothing less than Christ Himself living in them to accomplish His great mission of bringing salvation to men. II Corinthians 13:10-14.

Concluding Meditation

What a profound responsibility rests upon every Christian! It is not for us to choose our time nor our place; in history or in the world. God has brought us to this hour, now! And God has brought us to this place, here! We need not look for another or a better place to serve. We need not wait for some other day. "Now is the time! Today is the day!" We may add the thought "Here is the place!" This in my hands is what I am to do! May God help me to be faithful!

Happy is the Christian who can be humbly content and yet altogether faithful! Who will not underestimate the importance of being faithful in the home, in the office, at the shop, day by day! Who knows that God's hand is over all for good, and is trusting Him to work His will in all the affairs of men! Let us not look for the bigger place, nor for the better occasion. God knows all things, and doeth all things well. "He knoweth the way I take." Let us trust Him implicitly. "In quietness and confidence shall be your strength."

None of us will be perfect, and none of us will have everything easy. There will be trouble for us to face. But we need not fear. "Our God shall fight for us." Some of us will be called to go through dark valleys of sorrow, and to lie on beds of grief. Let us take courage in this thought: our sufferings will not be in vain, and, we will not have to bear them alone! God will keep! God will comfort! God will use! God will bless! "God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work!"

So let us take up our tasks with confidence. "Let us run with patience the race that is set before us." Let there be no absenteeism in our own spiritual activity, and in the work of God. Our labor is not in vain in the Lord. Each one of us has a personal assignment committed into our hands. Upon our faithfulness the welfare and happiness of others depend. "My grace is sufficient for thee." Let us remember too that "if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not."

Children play with unconcern as to the work in the world. But an increasing sense of intelligent responsibility is the mark of growing maturity. Our churches need members who will assume their own responsibility. Some who are mature must lead others who are still learning. No Christian is full grown until he realizes he is "not his own." He has been "bought with a price," and now is due to serve Him who bought him "with His own precious blood."

There will be some opposition, and it will hurt some. But the Christian need not falter. The Lord will keep him and use him, if only the believer is faithful to the Light that shines in his heart. Let us not yield our loved ones over to the world, without a struggle! Let us not lose them into the snare of the devil, because we fail to pray! Let us take up our part and "watch unto prayer" as God "moves in a mysterious way, His wonders to perform." Paul was willing to spend and to be spent, even though he might lose in human advantage. May God give us grace to walk and to war in spiritual things, that He can use us to His own glory in the blessing of others.