Anchored to Stand

**STUDIES IN SECOND CORINTHIANS**

**Lesson 15**

**II Corinthians 11:16-33**

***Stand With Deep Concern***

***…besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches.***

**II Corinthians 11:28**

The amount of love the apostle Paul had for the churches is immeasurable. Jesus said, *greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends.* Paul took these words to heart and lived a life that proved his deep and abiding love for the churches. He gave up comfort, safety, and dedicated his entire life to their service. When we read of Paul’s sufferings we can’t help but imagine how we would react if we were placed in the same situations. Most of us can honestly say that we care for our church family, but compared to Paul’s demonstration of deep concern we all fall short. Our study of II Corinthians 11:16-33 presents a thought-provoking and inspiring portion of scripture. We will read the accounts of Paul’s sufferings as an apostle and servant of the Lord and see details of the hardships, troubles and trials that he faced in his ministry. Perhaps the most startling thing about this is that Paul never suffered because of his own wrongdoing, he didn’t do anything to deserve the brutality inflicted upon him. *Paul was compelled by the love of Christ*. It was his sense of gratitude to the risen Lord who not only had forgiven him, filled him and restored him, but who went with him into these trials and sustained him in every one of them, turning them into experiences of joy rather than hardship. That love flowed through Paul to reach out to those around to whom he was ministering. He was no longer living for himself, but for the glory of God.

**First Day Overview: Read II Corinthians 11:16-33**

1. Read through this week’s portion of scripture. Choose and record a verse or phrase that stands out to you and write it here: Be sure to highlight or underline them in your Bible.
	1. Share why this verse or phrase ministered to you.
2. The false apostles were not ashamed to boast, but Paul was hesitant to boast of his claims to apostleship. What does Jeremiah 9:23-24 teach us about boasting?
3. The apostle Paul was converted on the road to Damascus when he encountered Jesus. It was there that Paul was blinded for three days and waited for a man named Ananias to lay hands on him to regain his sight. Read this account recorded for us in Acts 9:9-16
	1. What did the Lord tell Ananias about Paul? (verse 16)
	2. Paul knew in advance the things he would have to suffer, yet this did not stop him from moving forward with the ministry God had called him to. In what way is Paul a role model for you?
	3. Can you think of a current example of someone who is suffering for the sake of the Gospel?
4. As we read Paul’s account of his suffering and hardships, we cannot help but admire his courage and devotion. Each trial left a mark on his life, and yet he was immovable in his service to the Lord. Read Acts 20:24 and record what Paul said.

**Anchored In –** Paul’s desire was to glorify the Lord and finish the race with joy. Let’s make this our desire, too. Write down any hardships or trials you are facing today and ask the Lord enable you to endure them with joy in order that God might be glorified.

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***But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself,***

***So that I may finish my race with joy***

**Acts 20:24a**

**Second Day: Read II Corinthians 11:16-21**

1. Paul did not hesitate to boast about Christ, but was reluctant to boast about himself. He felt foolish and feared they would also think him foolish.
	1. Paul made a clarification in verse 17. What did he say?
	2. How would you describe foolish boasting?
2. The phrase *since you yourselves are wise* (verse 19b) is probably a reference to the Corinthians’ pride in their own wisdom.
	1. Why is relying on human wisdom in spiritual matters dangerous?
	2. What does Proverbs 3:5-7a say about this?
	3. In what way are you applying this truth to your own life today?
3. Read II Corinthians 11:20-21. Earlier Paul expressed his dismay at the Corinthian believers’ acceptance of false doctrine. Here he communicates his distress over their tolerance of mistreatment by the deceitful workers.
	1. From verse 20 list the various ways they had been mistreated.
	2. Why do you think they would tolerate this kind of behavior?
	3. The bondage Paul speaks of may indicate that these false apostles were legalists, trying to put people under the bondage of the law. Have you ever experienced this?
4. In 2 Corinthians 11:21 Paul continues the sarcasm and confesses that he is too *weak* to abuse his sheep the way the "super apostles" do. Guilty as charged! Sadly, many people are more comfortable with authoritarian "super apostles" than with the freedom they may have in Jesus. How might we fall prey to the same thinking as those in Corinth?
5. Use the following verses to discover and record key characteristics by which we can recognize a true minister of Christ:
	1. John 13:34-35
	2. I Peter 5:2-3

**Anchored In** – To have a pastor that loves his congregation and does not lord himself over them is a blessing none of us should take for granted. Take some time to thank the Lord for your pastors and then pray for God to protect and bless them.

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***Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches.***

**Galatians 6:6**

**THIRD DAY: Read 2 Corinthians 11:22-25**

Paul lists some of the tremendous trials and persecutions he personally faced for the cause of Christ. One beating of thirty-nine lashes was often enough to kill a man and Paul went through this five times! Jesus taught that only a true shepherd would protect and care for his sheep. Paul’s willingness to suffer for the sake of the church proves he is a true shepherd of the flock of God.

1. Apparently the false teachers were overly impressed with their heritage and boasted about it. In II Corinthians 11:22 Paul began to present his heritage by, once again, using questions to make his point. Record his response to the three questions in verse 22 using the scriptures below:
	1. Are they Hebrews? Philippians 3:5
	2. Are they Israelites? Romans 9:3b-4a
	3. Are they the seed of Abraham? Romans 11:1
2. In II Corinthians 11:23 Paul began to present his credentials, claiming to be a more qualified minister of Christ. Consider the measure of Paul’s sufferings as you list the four areas Paul pointed to in verse 23b.
	1. For an example of *deaths*, read Acts 14:19-21. What does it say?
	2. For an example of *stripes* and *prison* read Acts 16:22-25 and write verse 25 here:
	3. We see that Paul was singing praises to God after being beaten and thrown in prison. How do you think you would respond if the same thing happened to you?
3. Read II Corinthians 11:24. History tells us that the minister of the synagogue was to stand on a raised stone inflicting the blows ‘with all his might,’ using a redoubled calf strap, to which two other straps were attached. Thirteen blows were delivered to the chest and twenty-six to the back. The severity of this beating caused many to die as a result of their blows.
	1. Paul said he went through this five times! How might is soften the Corinthians heart towards Paul?
	2. Could you ever picture yourself enduring this for the sake of another? Why or Why not?
4. Read II Corinthians 11:25 and think about the awful suffering Paul experienced because he was Christ’s bondservant.
	1. Which of these mentioned in verse 25 stands out to you? Why?
	2. All believers will experience a degree of suffering. What hope and encouragement does Psalm 34:19 and John 16:33b provide?

**Anchored In –** Doesn’t it touch your heart to know that Paul endured all these things so that others could hear about Jesus? Take time today to pray for the persecuted church. Many of their lives are in danger. Lord, please help them!

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***Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake,***

***For theirs is the kingdom of heaven***

**Matthew 5:10**

**Fourth Day – Read II Corinthians 11:26-29**

*To endure the cross is not tragedy; it is the suffering, which is the fruit of an exclusive allegiance to Jesus Christ*. - Deitrich Bonhoeffer

1. It has been said, Paul’s scars were his credentials; no doubt his beatings had left him with permanent marks on his body. In addition to being beaten, stoned and imprisoned, Paul was exposed to the perils of travel. Record several of them from the following verses:
	1. II Corinthians 11:26
	2. II Corinthians 11:27
	3. What especially grips your heart today? Why?
	4. Have you ever experienced any of these hardships Paul mentions in your own life?
2. Paul had already suffered so much more than we could ever fathom, yet he lists one more thing that was weighing on his heart daily. His greatest burden was not around him, but within him. Read II Corinthians 11:28
	1. What was Paul’s deep concern?
	2. What was Paul’s unique relationship to the believers in Corinth? Read I Corinthians 4:15.
	3. Think of your own children (spiritual children or natural children); how can you relate to Paul’s deep concern on a daily basis?
3. Whatever happened to Paul’s "children” touched his own heart, and he could not abandon them. Read II Corinthians 11:29 and answer the following questions:
	1. How does Paul’s attitude reflect the heart of Jesus, our Good Shepherd?
	2. Read Romans 12:15 and Galatians 6:2. How does this speak to you as a servant of the Lord?
	3. What are some things that hinder us from bearing one another’s burdens?
	4. Paul’s willingness to suffer for the sake of another reminds us of Jesus. He could honestly say, *imitate me just as I also imitate Christ*. Read Isaiah 53:3-5 and share your thoughts:

**Anchored In** –Jesus cares so much for us that he acted upon His love. He gladly took our burden of sin and placed it upon Himself; you could say He loved us to death. Think about His tremendous love and care for us as you respond with praise and thanksgiving. Journal your thoughts:

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***Once for all my debts were paid, once for all my guilty stains***

***Once for all mankind
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**Fifth Day – Read II Corinthians 11:30-33**

*Where does your security lie? Is God your refuge, your hiding place, your stronghold, your shepherd, your counselor, your friend, your redeemer, your savior, your guide? If He is, you don't need to search any further for security. Elisabeth Elliot*

1. Paul’s example in II Corinthians 11:30 should inspire each of us.
	1. Rather than *boasting* or *glorying* in his accomplishments, in what did Paul choose to glory?
	2. *I would rather boast about the things that show how weak I am* (NLT). What does this reveal to you about Paul?
	3. What inspiration do you receive from Paul’s example?
2. Paul must have known that his enemies in Corinth would accuse him of exaggerating or lying about his sufferings and his concern for the churches.
	1. Write Paul’s defense to this from II Corinthians 11:31
	2. How should this have affected his accusers?
3. Paul wrote about an actual account of a life-threatening experience, which happened in Damascus soon after his conversion.
	1. Combine II Corinthians 11:32-33 with Acts 9:20-25 and write a short news article about his radical experience.
	2. What headline would you give for Paul’s escape?
4. This account illustrates the contrast between Saul of Tarsus and Paul the Apostle. Saul of Tarsus traveled to Damascus full of man's worldly power and authority, directed against God's people. Paul the Apostle left Damascus humbly in a basket! In what way are you completely different than you were before you became a Christian?
5. Perhaps you have seen God’s hand of protection in your own life. Do you have a compelling experience of deliverance? If so, briefly note it here.

**Anchored in** – Remember back in II Corinthians 1:10 we learned that our God delivers us from all our troubles; past, present and future. Rejoice in God’s daily deliverance by writing a note of thanksgiving or singing a song of praise.

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***And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work,***

***And will preserve me unto His heavenly kingdom:***

***To Whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.***

***II Timothy 4:18***

**Sixth Day- STAND with Deep Concern**

Paul was a reluctant boaster and it’s hard to believe, that with all the remarkable trials he had faced, he had refrained from using them as leverage up until this point. It was only when he felt pressed to prove his love for the Corinthian believers that Paul laid down the credentials for his ministry. It is interesting that his credentials were not based on academic success nor worldly tangible achievements. Paul’s credentials were the scars he had obtained for the sake of others that they might partake of the grace of God. The care, compassion and deep concern Paul had for the church was his motivation for enduring the suffering. The true mark of Paul’s ministry was his willingness to become nothing so that, through him, Christ could become everything for everyone. Unfortunately, an apathetic attitude that doesn’t want to get involved in other people’s problems can hinder us from reflecting this kind of love. Just think how powerful the witness, how great the impact would be, if the church would stand with deep concern for one another.

1. Paul’s shares in some detail of his deep concern for the churches in Acts 20:29-31.
	1. What does Paul say?
	2. As a part of the flock of God, what things should we be concerned about?
	3. Do you have the same compassion for the health of the church as Paul did? Share your thoughts:
2. Although there were many false apostles who were out to get Paul, there were also genuine brethren who loved Paul. Continue reading in Acts 20:32-38 to see Paul’s farewell to the church leaders from Ephesus. What part stands out to you? Why?
3. In a healthy church, we should all demonstrate a deep concern for one another. Many of us are hurting and are in need of support. We are the body of Christ and should not neglect one another. Read Paul’s instructions for the church recorded in Romans 12:10-15 and choose a phrase from each section that you desire to apply to your own life. Be sure to share why:
	1. Verse 10-11:
	2. Verse 12-13:
	3. Verse 14-15:
	4. What kinds of things hinder us from fulfilling these instructions?
	5. Read I Corinthians 12:26. How might Paul’s instructions change the way we interact with one another within the church?
4. There are people all around us who are lost and stuck in sin; they are in desperate need of the hope found in Jesus. As the church, we should be concerned about them, too.
	1. What did Jesus say about the lost in Matthew 9:36-38?
	2. How might this change the way you see people who don’t know Jesus?
	3. Read Paul’s words recorded in I Corinthians 9:19-23 and write down some of the things you see.
	4. Share a time you have become *all things to all men* so that someone might be saved.

**Anchored In –** Recall a need or prayer request from someone in your small group or your church body. Begin by praying for them and then ask the Lord to show you a way you can reach out to them (a phone call, text, email, or perhaps a visit), and express your *deep concern* for them.

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***By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another* - John 13:35**