**NOT YOUR POSSESSION, BUT YOU**

2 Corinthians 12:11-21

Key Verse 14a

“Now I am ready to visit you for the third time, and I will not be a burden to you, because what I want is not your possessions but you.”

**Introduction**



Paul continually defended himself from false apostles. A sentence “I will not be a burden to you” is repeated three times in today’s short passage. He was concerned about what is good for them. He was misunderstood by some of the Corinthian believers due to the false accusation against him. But Paul was not angry about it, rather he showed in various ways about how much he had loved them out of the bottom of his heart. His heart and love must have come from the Lord who is the Chief Shepherd. May the Lord help us to learn of his godly love and grow as a good shepherd.

1. Read verses 11-13. Why should the Corinthian believers have commended Paul as an apostle? (11-12) Why did he ask them to forgive him? (13)

1-1, Read verses 11-13.

I have made a fool of myself, but you drove me to it. I ought to have been commended by you, for I am not in the least inferior to the “super-apostles,”[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=+2++Corinthians+12&version=NIV#fen-NIV-29034a)] even though I am nothing. **12** I persevered in demonstrating among you the marks of a true apostle, including signs, wonders and miracles. **13** How were you inferior to the other churches, except that I was never a burden to you? Forgive me this wrong!

1-2, Why should the Corinthian believers have commended Paul as an apostle? (11-12)

***I have made a fool of myself, but you drove me to it. I ought to have been commended by you, for I am not in the least inferior to the “super-apostles,” even though I am nothing.***

* First, it was because apostle Paul sacrificially served them and pioneered the Corinthian church in Acts 18.
* When the Corinthian believers were in total darkness due to their idol worships, Paul tirelessly persuaded them to accept the truth that Jesus is the Messiah.
* Since then, they were led astray because of some impressive super-apostles and their false teachings.
* In order to help them to restore their faith and love for God, Paul had to go through pain and even make himself a fool by boasting of his credentials. He clarified that he had been led to do so to help them only.
* Paul points out that he is nothing. By the grace of Jesus, he was called to serve them. He always identify himself as nothing before God who should be praised only.

***12 I persevered in demonstrating among you the marks of a true apostle, including signs, wonders and miracles.***

* The Lord helped him with signs, wonders, and miracles to confirm his ministry in the Gentile territory as his mission field.
* At the same time Paul had to be patient long enough to babysit them until they might be sanctified in Jesus’ image.
* In contrast, false apostles were not patient like him but they abuse the Corinthian believers.
* Praise God who changed apostle Paul. He visited two times and wrote three long letters for them to repent of their compromise with super apostles.

1-3, Why did he ask them to forgive him? (13)

***13 How were you inferior to the other churches, except that I was never a burden to you? Forgive me this wrong!***

* It was because he refused to take their financial support although it was a blessing from the Lord in that the Corinthian believers had chance to have God’s indescribable gift by means of giving offering to support Paul.
* As a matter of fact, Paul had been supported by the Philippian church in order to focus on serving the Corinthian church. Even he said in the previous chapter that he ended up robbing other churches to serve the Corinthians instead of other churches because he had received support from them.
* However he did not claim his right in the Corinthian church, probably because they were not mature enough to do so according to his prayer for them.
* Although we do not know the exact reason behind, the outcome is that Paul ended up robbing such great blessing they could have practiced their financial obligation to support God’s work in and through supporting Paul financially.
* That is why he asked them to forgive him in a sense that their church is kind of being inferior to other churches in this aspect.

1. Read verses 14-18. What was Paul’s purpose in visiting them this third time? (14a) How did he describe the relationship between himself and the Corinthians? (14b) How did he express his father’s heart for them? (15) How did he defend himself in regards to their criticism? (16-18)

2-1, Read verses 14-18.

Now I am ready to visit you for the third time, and I will not be a burden to you, because what I want is not your possessions but you. After all, children should not have to save up for their parents, but parents for their children. **15** So I will very gladly spend for you everything I have and expend myself as well. If I love you more, will you love me less? **16** Be that as it may, I have not been a burden to you.Yet, crafty fellow that I am, I caught you by trickery! **17** Did I exploit you through any of the men I sent to you? **18** I urged Titus to go to you and I sent our brother with him. Titus did not exploit you, did he? Did we not walk in the same footsteps by the same Spirit?

2-2, What was Paul’s purpose in visiting them this third time? (14a)

***Now I am ready to visit you for the third time, and I will not be a burden to you, because what I want is not your possessions but you.***

* The purpose of his third visit was to help the Corinthian believers to restore their faith. He clarified again that he would not be a burden to them financially.
* What Paul wanted was not their possession but them. He had had a clear purpose always to help the Corinthians so that they may stand firm in the Lord.
* In Acts 18, he visited the city of Corinth at the first time to establish the church. Then he made a painful visit as he had mentioned before. But he prefered to not visit them for the third time because they were not ready to restore fully.
* Paul had been patient so far and wrote the third letter and must have been prayed for them a lot and finally he was now ready to visit them for the third time.

2-3, How did he describe the relationship between himself and the Corinthians? (14b)

***After all, children should not have to save up for their parents, but parents for their children.***

* He described the relationship between himself and the Corinthians as the immediate family relationship like parents and children.
* Children should not have to save up for their parents, rather parents for their children. It is amazing that God changed Paul from a strict legalist into a man of love.

1 Corinthians 4:15 reads,

Even if you had ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel.

2-4, How did he express his father’s heart for them? (15)

***15 So I will very gladly spend for you everything I have and expend myself as well. If I love you more, will you love me less?***

* Paul expressed his father’s heart for them by saying that he would very gladly spend for them everything he had.
* Furthermore, he said that he would expend himself also. The word, “expend” means to spend or use up all resources he might have. He did not draw the line about how much he loved them. Even he risked his own life to love them.
* “If I love you more, will you love me less?” - Paul must have expected that they did not love him back as much as he had loved them. But he imitated God’s unidirectional love and continue to love and give himself for them.

2-5, How did he defend himself in regards to their criticism? (16-18)

***16 Be that as it may, I have not been a burden to you.Yet, crafty fellow that I am, I caught you by trickery! 17 Did I exploit you through any of the men I sent to you? 18 I urged Titus to go to you and I sent our brother with him. Titus did not exploit you, did he? Did we not walk in the same footsteps by the same Spirit?***

* Paul defended himself by mentioning his sincere coworkers like Titus who has been serving them faithfully in the matter of handling their offerings.
* “Did we not walk in the same footsteps by the same Spirit?” - Praise Jesus who raise up such reliable and honest servants of God to work together in the same mindset.

1. Read verses 19-21. What was Paul’s goal in defending himself? (19) What was Paul’s ongoing concern for them? (20-21) What can we learn from him who helped them to repent of their sins?

3-1, Read verses 19-21.

**19** Have you been thinking all along that we have been defending ourselves to you? We have been speaking in the sight of God as those in Christ; and everything we do, dear friends, is for your strengthening. **20** For I am afraid that when I come I may not find you as I want you to be, and you may not find me as you want me to be. I fear that there may be discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, slander, gossip, arrogance and disorder. **21** I am afraid that when I come again my God will humble me before you, and I will be grieved over many who have sinned earlier and have not repented of the impurity, sexual sin and debauchery in which they have indulged.

3-2, What was Paul’s goal in defending himself? (19)

***19 Have you been thinking all along that we have been defending ourselves to you? We have been speaking in the sight of God as those in Christ; and everything we do, dear friends, is for your strengthening.***

* Paul’s defending was not his own personal gain, but for their strengthening. “Everything we do is for your strengthening” Paul had a clear goal to strengthen them.

3-3, What was Paul’s ongoing concern for them? (20-21)

***20 For I am afraid that when I come I may not find you as I want you to be, and you may not find me as you want me to be. I fear that there may be discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, slander, gossip, arrogance and disorder. 21 I am afraid that when I come again my God will humble me before you, and I will be grieved over many who have sinned earlier and have not repented of the impurity, sexual sin and debauchery in which they have indulged.***

* There are a couple of things mentioned by him. One is about breaking the unity of the church under the authority God established. The other is about sexual sins.
* Although Paul helped them with many issues in the Corinthian church members, still at the final stage of his letter he was concerned about these two things the most.
* “I am afraid that when I come I may not find you as I want you to be, and you may not find me as you want me to be.” - It means that he thought that still they were in the residual symptom of these two things.
* I fear that there may be discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, slander, gossip, arrogance and disorder. - The first and last word helps us to see that they are not unified yet because of envy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, slander, arrogance.
* As usual, these are toward those who have authority in the church. In the Corinthian church, it might look normal to speak ill of leaders in a liberal way. But in the Church God established, there is a order. So it led them to discord and disorder.
* Trust was broken among them and it took long time to recover godly order. After helping them with three letters and two visits, they were not fully recovered in this regard. As a spiritual father, he helped them to repent of any hint of sin and be united again under the same spirit under the Lord our God.
* “I am afraid that when I come again my God will humble me before you, and I will be grieved over many who have sinned earlier and have not repented of the impurity, sexual sin and debauchery in which they have indulged.” - Apostle Paul was a very humble servant by saying that my God will humble me before you.
* When someone did not repent of their sins, we are apt to be out of patience. But Paul helped them with humility and gentleness of Christ Jesus to the end.
* He was willing to humble himself again and again so that they may be willing to open their hearts to repent of their sins before God. I will be grieved over many who have sinned earlier. May the Lord help us to learn of his long patience in Him.
* The impurity, sexual sin and debauchery in which they have indulged. It seems to us that the Corinthian church was suffered by the sexual sins without full repentance. Apostle Paul wanted them to repent of any hint of sexual sins.

3-4, What can we learn from him who helped them to repent of their sins?

* As a spiritual parent, he loved them very much with God’s love. But it does not mean that he will compromise with their sins. Rather he helped them to repent of their sins to the end.
* Sometimes he was a like a loving mom and sometimes he was like a stern father who rebuked his children whenever it is necessary.
* May the Lord help us to grow as a spiritual parent like him. Amen.

**Conclusion**

This passage helps us to see through Paul’s heart and love for the Corinthians. It is not easy to help them because of their tedious sin problems. But Paul never gave in. Rather he wrote the letter again and again. He visited them again and again although previous visit was painful and he might not want to do it again. At this passage, he was led into God’s heart and his shepherd life reflected God’s core desire to give and love them continually. Praise Jesus who changed a strict and legalistic pharisee, Saul into a man of humility and love. May the Lord help us to grow into the image of Jesus who is the Chief Shepherd. Amen.

**One word: I will expend myself!**