

“And I will very gladly spend and be spent for your souls; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I am loved” (2 Cor. 12:15).

Poor Paul!

Some Corinthians had been deceived by false teachers and had turned away from the apostle Paul, their *spiritual* father (1 Cor. 4:15). Unrequited love is a painful, empty feeling. Paul felt its pangs but never lost hope for his beloved children in the faith. Yet the **more love** he bestowed upon them by his many sacrificial deeds, the less he was appreciated.

Paul’s Boastings

Paul was truly embarrassed to recount the many blessings he had received as an apostle. He did not want people to think that the **power** resided in him. It was a *gift* from God. But it was for the benefit of **others**, including the Corinthians. They had forgotten what God had done for them through Paul!

Only Paul was given an “*abundance of the revelations*” (2 Cor. 12:7). He was also given a “*thorn in the flesh*” to keep him humble. His gifts were not about him, but about Jesus Christ.

Paul’s enemies were *many* because his gifts were *many*. Thus he took pleasure in “*infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake*” (v. 10). Satan was hot on his heels -- he must have been doing something right! And it was easier for Paul to be **spiritually** strong when he was **physically** weak! The frailties of life have a way of reminding one of the eternal.

Again Paul reminds his spiritual children that in **nothing** was he behind the most eminent apostles (v. 11). He had worked the signs of an apostle among them to validate his gospel (v. 12)! He had shown them *signs, wonders* and *mighty deeds*. I suppose they had taken Paul for granted. So he reminded them.

Another Trip!

Paul informed the Corinthian church that he would be coming to them for *the third time* (v. 14). He was not coming to **collect**, but to **give more** of himself. “*For the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children*” (v. 14). (Of course, one begins to wonder if the “*children*” will ever grow up! Will they ever appreciate Paul’s parental sacrifices?!)

“And I will very gladly spend and be spent for your souls; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I am loved” (v. 15). Paul never regretted or resented *a day of his life* spent on his children. But he was sorely grieved over their lack of appreciation and growth because of it. He would not be with them forever. He could not always prop them up. He worried about their spiritual condition.

Troublers

False teachers, false apostles, were troubling the saints at Corinth! They had cast many false accusations in Paul’s direction. First, he was accused of converting people for his own benefit! Then he was accused of not being an apostle because he refused to prosper financially from them! He *sarcastically* alludes to these lies when he said, “*But be that as it may, I did not burden you. Nevertheless, being crafty, I caught you by cunning!*” (v. 16). In other words, he was mocking his accusers by playing along with them: “Yes sir, I sure pulled one over on you! I converted you so that I could spend more of myself!” No, that’s not why false apostles destroy souls. They destroy souls to get all they can from their prey. Paul was no false apostle. He proved it by word and deed. Some Corinthians were having a hard time seeing it.

Beloved, before you are turned aside from the Lord and drawn into the world, remember Paul, the Lord and the Gospel. God *always* gives back more to you than He ever asks of you (2 Cor. 9:10-11). He does you good, and not evil all the days of your life! Don’t be deceived! Stay with Jesus Christ.