



— SECOND — CORINTHIANS



The Comfort of God FOR and THROUGH His People

Part 39—“The Relationship Between a Church & Its Leaders ”— 8 September 2024

Introduction:

In the world that God has created, the exercise of authority among groups of people is inevitable. Because the world is fallen and so are we, those who exercise authority and those who are to be under it are prone to reject God’s good design. All authority is derived from our Creator and is to be exercised in accordance with His will and commands. This is ultimately for His glory and for the good of others.

I Pet. 5:2-3—² *shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly;* ³ *not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.*

Heb. 13:17—*Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.*

Main Point: The relationship between a church and its leaders is intended by God to be one of mutual _____ and _____ service in accordance with His good design.

2 Corinthians 12:11-18

Context

Paul has addressed the criticisms of his opponents in Corinth and has also asked the Corinthians to bear with him as he foolishly boasts of his “accomplishments.” These are things that his opponents would consider shameful but he glories in them because his own limitations and weaknesses display Christ’s strength. He now turns to affirm his love for them and to ask them why they seem unwilling to do so for him.

Exposition

I. Paul confronts the Corinthians about their failure to defend him and asks them to consider the ministry that he had among them. (12:11-13)

2 Cor. 12:11-12—¹¹ *I have been a fool! You forced me to it, for I ought to have been commended by you. For I was not at all inferior to these super-apostles, even though I am nothing.* ¹² *The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with utmost patience, with signs and wonders and mighty works.*

⇒ Paul concludes his “foolishness discourse” by explaining why it was necessary: He was doing only what the Corinthians themselves should have done for him!

“I ought to have been commended by you”—συνίστημι (*synistēmi*)—to present, introduce, or recommend someone

⇒ The Corinthians should reject the claims of his opponents and _____ the ministry he had when he was among them.
“super-apostles”

“This church was founded by Paul (1 Cor. 4:14-16) and received all its early training in the way of righteousness from him; but when he is subtly maligned by these latecomer super-apostles, the Corinthians themselves, far from stoutly defending Paul and smartly turfing the interlopers out, have kept their peace about Paul and become the dupes of the frauds they should have disciplined.”
—D.A. Carson

⇒ The Corinthians seem to be judging Paul’s time in Corinth by the standard of these ‘super-apostles’ and feeling ‘less _____’ than the other churches.

Paul’s Defense of His Time in Corinth

(1) Paul had endured _____ as he carried out his ministry among the Corinthians.

“patience”—ὑπομονή (*hypomonē*)—to hold out or bear up in difficulty; patience, endurance, fortitude, steadfastness, perseverance

(2) Paul’s ministry, like those of the other apostles, was _____ to by miracles.

“signs”

“wonders”

“mighty works”

* These are associated with the powerful works of God in the OT, especially in the Exodus (Duet. 6:22). They accompanied the ministry of Jesus, attesting to His claims to be Messiah (Acts 2:22). They were also prevalent in the ministry of the apostles, justifying their claims about Christ (Acts 5:12). It is possible, however, for false teachers and false prophets to manifest these kinds of works in order to deceive others (Mark 13:22; 2 Thess. 2:9) which is why they must be accompanied by the right preaching of the Word and a proclamation of the true Gospel.

(3) The only difference between Paul’s time in Corinth and his time in other places was that he did not accept _____ support from the Corinthians while he was among them.

Key Points: The powerful works of God are not done for _____ and self-aggrandizement, but for God's glory and often in seasons of _____.

It is for those who have benefitted from the work of God through a church or ministry to _____ it to others and to _____ its leaders from unfair criticism or attacks.

2. Paul defends the integrity of his ministry while also questioning them more directly about the accusations made against him and his ministry partners. (12:14-18)

2 Cor. 12:14-15— ¹⁴Here for the third time I am ready to come to you. And I will not be a burden, for I seek not what is yours but you. For children are not obligated to save up for their parents, but parents for their children. ¹⁵I will most gladly spend and be spent for your souls. If I love you more, am I to be loved less?

⇒ Paul had visited them already on _____ occasions: When he first came to Corinth and for the 'painful' visit. On both occasions he refused to take anything from the Corinthians.

⇒ His refusal of their financial support had to do with his own love for them and understanding of his ministry as an apostle.

"I seek not what is yours by you"

"I seek larger wages than you think, for I am not content with your riches but I seek the whole of you in order to present you to the Lord as a sacrifice from the fruits of my ministry." —John Calvin

⇒ He grounds this assertion in the metaphor of a _____ and then declares the intent of his ministry.

(1) Like a good parent, he is willing to " _____ " on their behalf.

(2) Like a good parent, he is willing to be " _____ " for their benefit.

"Applied to a person, as here, it means to expend oneself in the sense of the sacrifice of one's life."—Colin Kruse

⇒ Paul then asks a direct but reasonable question: *"...am I to be loved less?"*

Key Point: The love of leaders for their people should be _____ by those they labor on behalf of.

⇒ There seem to be two primary criticisms that were made against Paul:

(1) He was "crafty"

(2) He got the better of them by "deceit"

⇒ He concludes with a series of questions for them regarding his companions and the conduct of their ministry in Corinth.

"Did Titus take advantage of you?"

"If his coworkers are not guilty of some kind of financial intrigue, then how could they think that he was? Why, after preaching the gospel for free and refusing to become a burden to them, would he now try to take advantage of them in some underhanded way?...They have quite failed to understand the reasons behind his refusal of their support."—David Garland

Key Point: There are certainly times when leaders can be _____, but they also have the right to question those who accuse them of wrong actions or motives.

Concluding Thought

- The Lord Jesus intends for the fruit of His own life to be _____ in and through His church.

Mark 10:42-45— ⁴²And Jesus called them to him and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. ⁴³But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. ⁴⁵For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."



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Heb. 13:17—Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.

Main Point: The relationship between a church and its leaders is intended by God to be one of mutual **trust** and **sacrificial** service in accordance with His good design.

2 Corinthians 12:11-18

Context

Paul has addressed the criticisms of his opponents in Corinth and has also asked the Corinthians to bear with him as he foolishly boasts of his “accomplishments.” These are things that his opponents would consider shameful but he glories in them because his own limitations and weaknesses display Christ’s strength. He now turns to affirm his love for them and to ask them why they seem unwilling to do so for him.

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⇒ Paul concludes his “foolishness discourse” by explaining why it was necessary: He was doing only what the Corinthians themselves should have done for him!

“I ought to have been commended by you”—συνίστημι (synistēmi)—to present, introduce, or recommend someone

⇒ The Corinthians should reject the claims of his opponents and **recall** the ministry he had when he was among them.
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⇒ The Corinthians seem to be judging Paul’s time in Corinth by the standard of these ‘super-apostles’ and feeling ‘less **favored**’ than the other churches.

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(1) Paul had endured **patiently** as he carried out his ministry among the Corinthians.

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(3) The only difference between Paul’s time in Corinth and his time in other places was that he did not accept **financial** support from the Corinthians while he was among them.

Key Points: The powerful works of God are not done for show and self-aggrandizement, but for God's glory and often in seasons of hardship.

It is for those who have benefitted from the work of God through a church or ministry to commend it to others and to defend its leaders from unfair criticism or attacks.

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