

Day 1

 Please pray for holy guidance and insight before you begin today's study.

Paul's Love for the Church

¹¹I 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.

Q1. ***Super-apostles***: Who might the Corinthians call “super-apostles”? (Hint: Acts 3:1; 5:29)

Q2. ***I am not in the least inferior to the “super-apostles”***: This is a review question: how can the Apostle Paul consider himself equivalent (‘not inferior’) to the Apostles from Jerusalem?

Q3. ***I have made a fool of myself***: This seems to be a recurring statement: why does Paul consider this line of argument foolish?

Q4. ***You drove me to it***: This is a review question: How did the Corinthians ‘drive’ the Apostle Paul to ‘make a fool of myself’?

Lesson 15: 2 Corinthians 12:11-21

Day 2

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¹² The things that mark an apostle — signs, wonders, and miracles — were done among you with great perseverance.

Q5. Generally, did the Apostle Paul ever perform “*the things that mark a disciple*”? Specifically, did Paul ever perform “signs, wonders, and miracles” in Corinth? (Hint: refer to page 6 of this StudySheet)

Generally: Yes? No? (Why did you circle that answer?)

Specifically: Yes? No? (Why did you circle that answer?)

 **With great perseverance:** From the Apostle Paul's point of view, the commentator Albert Barnes made this observation regarding the phrase “with great perseverance”: “I performed those works notwithstanding the opposition which I met with. I patiently persevered in furnishing the evidence of my divine commission. There was a succession of miracles demonstrating that I was from God, notwithstanding the unreasonable opposition which I met with, until I convinced you that I was called to the office of an apostle.” [©1834, *Notes on the Bible* by Albert Barnes. https://biblehub.com/commentaries/2_corinthians/12-12.htm]

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

 Evidently, as Paul conversed with Titus (2 Corinthians 7:6-7) — a debriefing, if you will — about the condition of the Corinthian church, Titus reported that some of the Corinthians thought Paul had been a burden to them and had considered them inferior to other churches.

Q6. Thinking back over this Second Letter to the Corinthians, can you write-down instances in which Paul was generous to the Corinthians? Or at least not “a burden”?

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Day 3

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^{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. ^{14b} After all, children should not have to save up for their parents, but parents for their children. ^{15a} So I will very gladly spend for you everything I have and expend myself as well. ^{15b} If I love you more, will you love me less?

Q7. (Verse 14^a) ***I am ready to visit you for the third time:*** Do we know if the Apostle Paul managed to visit the Corinthians for a third time?

Yes? } Why did you circle that answer?
No? }

 The historical record lists two visits from Paul to Corinth. We Bible students today do not know if Paul made a third visit to Corinth that was never recorded, or if God intervened, 'changed Paul's plans,' and sent him to another ripe-for-ministry community. We do know that the Apostle Paul visited Corinth twice and planned a third visit.

Acts 16:6-8 [NIV-1984]

[Two examples of God changing Paul's planned itinerary:]

⁵ So the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers.

⁶ Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia.

⁷ When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. ⁸ So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas.

Q8. (Verse 14^a) ***What I want is not your possessions but you:*** What exactly is Paul seeking?

PAUL WANTS TO WIN THEIR S _____ _____ L S FOR CHRIST JESUS

Q9. (Verse 14^b) ***Parents:*** What is Paul's relationship to the Corinthians? Paul is a . . .

S P _____ R _____ T _____ L _____ F _____ T _____ R

 **Children** (Verse 14^b): "There is great delicacy and address in this sentiment. The meaning is, 'It is not natural and usual for children to make provisions for their parents. The common course of events and of duty is, for parents to make provision for their offspring. I, therefore, your spiritual father, choose to act in the same way. I make provision for your spiritual needs; I labor and toil for you as a father does for his children. I seek your welfare, as he does, by constant self-denial. In return, I do not ask you to provide for me, any more than a father ordinarily expects his children to provide for him. I am willing to labor as he does, content with doing my duty, and promoting the welfare of those under me.' The words rendered '[should not]' (οὐ ὀφείλει ου ὀφείλει) are to be understood in a comparative sense. Paul does not mean that a child ought never to provide for his parents, or to lay anything up for a sick, a poor, and an infirm father, but that the duty of doing that was slight and unusual compared with the duty of a parent to

Lesson 15: 2 Corinthians 12:11-21

provide for his children. The one was of comparatively rare occurrence; the other was constant and was the ordinary course of duty. It is a matter of obligation for a child to provide for an aged and helpless parent; but commonly the duty is that of a parent to provide for his [or her] children. Paul felt like a father toward the church in Corinth; and he was willing, therefore, to labor for them without compensation.” [©1834, *Notes on the Bible* by Albert Barnes. https://biblehub.com/commentaries/2_corinthians/12-14.htm]

Q10. (Verse 14^b) Generally, a parent sacrifices time, money, love, and anxiety (e.g., an illness) for their child ([storgé love](#)). What, if anything, did Paul sacrifice for the Corinthians?

Q11. (Verse 15^b) *If I love you more, will you love me less*: This is a curious sentence. Does it mean that as the Apostle Paul increases (if that is at all possible) his demonstrated love of a devoted servant to the Corinthians, their love and appreciation will likewise increase, too; or will the devotion of the Corinthians decrease toward Paul?

 *If I love you more, will you love me less*: “This is designed doubtless as a gentle reproof. It refers to the fact that notwithstanding the tender attachment which he had evinced [a clear demonstration] for them, they had not manifested the love in return which he had a right to expect. It is possible that there may be an allusion to the case of a fond, doting parent. It sometimes happens that a parent fixes his affections with undue degree on some one of his children; and in such cases it is not uncommon that the child evinces [demonstrates] special ingratitude and lack of love. Such may be the allusion here – that Paul had fixed his affections on them like a fond, doting father, and that he had met with a return by no means corresponding with the fervour of his attachment; yet still he was willing, like such a father, to exhaust his time and strength for their welfare. The doctrine is, that we should be willing to labor and toil for the good of others, even when they evince great ingratitude. The proper end of laboring for their welfare is not to excite their gratitude, but to obey the will of God; and no matter whether others are grateful or not; whether they love us or not; whether we can promote our popularity with them or not, let us do them good always. It better shows the firmness of our Christian principle to endeavor to benefit others when they love us the less for all our attempts, than it does to attempt to do good on the swelling tide of popular favor.” [©1834, *Notes on the Bible* by Albert Barnes. https://biblehub.com/commentaries/2_corinthians/12-15.htm]

Lesson 15: 2 Corinthians 12:11-21

Day 4

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¹⁶Be that as it may, I have not been a burden to you. Yet, crafty fellow that I am, I caught you by trickery!

Q12. *I caught you by trickery*: What “trickery” did Paul use?

 “The abruptness of the sentence requires us to trace between the lines the under-currents of unexpressed thoughts. The extreme, almost jealous, sensitiveness of the Apostle’s nature leads him to imagine the cynical sneer with which these assertions of disinterested work would be received. “*Be that as it may*,” he hears them saying; “we admit that he, in his own person, when he was with us, made no demands on our purses; but what are we to think of this ‘collection for the saints’? How do we know into whose pockets that money will go? We know him to be subtle enough” (the adjective is that from which we get the “subtlety” of 2 Corinthians 4:2; 2 Corinthians 11:3) ‘to take us in somehow: what if the collection be a trap?’ There is a specially taunting force in the Greek for ‘being crafty [trickery],’ as taking the fact for granted, and assuming that it would inevitably lead on to some new development of that character in act.” [©about 1880, Ellicott’s Commentary for English Readers, edited by Charles J. Ellicott. https://biblehub.com/commentaries/2_corinthians/12-16.htm]

¹⁷Did I exploit you through any of the men I sent you? ¹⁸I urged Titus to go to you and I sent our brother with him. Titus did not exploit you, did he? Did we not act in the same spirit and follow the same course?

 Paul continues to question the Corinthians about their perceptions of his motives. Did Paul gain financially from his ministry to them? Did his colleagues gain financially? Did Paul plunder them? Or commit fraud? Or theft? Obviously, we do not know how the Corinthians responded to Paul’s letter. . . . (see the next question)

Q13. How should the Corinthians have responded to Paul’s letter? (Offended or contrite? Insulted or repentant? Belligerent or seeking forgiveness? Other thoughts?)

Lesson 15: 2 Corinthians 12:11-21

Day 5

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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.

Q14. ***Have you been thinking all along that we have been defending ourselves to you:*** A debate strategy is to force your opponent to defend their statements; however, Paul states that he has not been defending. Has Paul been speaking the truth? And Who is Paul's witness?

 ***We have been speaking in the sight of God as those in Christ:*** "We declare the simple and undisguised truth as in the presence of God. I have no mere desire to palliate my conduct; I disguise nothing; I conceal nothing; I say nothing for the mere purpose of self-vindication, but I can appeal to the Searcher-of-hearts for the exact truth of all that I say. The phrase 'before God in Christ,' means probably, 'I speak as in the presence of God, and as a follower of Christ, as a Christian man.' It is the solemn appeal of a Christian to his God for the truth of what he said, and a solemn asseveration that what he said was not for the mere purpose of excusing or apologizing for (the sense of the Greek) his conduct. [©1834, Notes on the Bible by Albert Barnes. https://biblehub.com/commentaries/2_corinthians/12-19.htm]

Q15. (Verse 19) ***And everything we do, dear friends, is for your strengthening:***
As Paul uses the word — what is "strengthening"?

²⁰ For I am afraid that when I come, ^① I may not find you as I want you to be, and ^② you may not find me as you want me to be. ^③ I fear that there may be quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, factions, slander, gossip, arrogance, and disorder.

Q16. Why does Paul "fear"?

① I may not find you as I want you to be:

② You may not find me as you want me to be:

③ There may be quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, factions, slander, gossip, arrogance, and disorder:

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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.

Q17. ***I will be grieved:*** Why would Paul be “grieved”?

Q18. Many who have sinned earlier and have not repented: Is repentance important?

Day 6

 Please pray for holy guidance and insight before you begin today’s study.

Q19. Thinking back over chapter 12, verses 1-21, did any verse or thought particularly impact you?

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