

## 2 Corinthians 12:11-21, A Lover's Quarrel with the Church

<sup>11</sup> 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. <sup>12</sup> I persevered in demonstrating among you the marks of a true apostle, including signs, wonders and miracles. <sup>13</sup> How were you inferior to the other churches, except that I was never a burden to you? Forgive me this wrong!

<sup>14</sup> 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. <sup>15</sup> 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? <sup>16</sup> Be that as it may, I have not been a burden to you. Yet, crafty fellow that I am, I caught you by trickery! <sup>17</sup> Did I exploit you through any of the men I sent to you? <sup>18</sup> 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?

<sup>19</sup> 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. <sup>20</sup> 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. <sup>21</sup> 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.

### Notes:

- Verses 11-13 are seen as the end of Paul's “fool's speech” that began in 11:16.
- Verses 14-18 reiterate Paul's desire to not be a burden, to expend himself for them and to send others for their benefit.
- Verses 19-21 returns to a them throughout the letter of him not commending himself, but rather allowing their exalting of Christ among them as its own proof of commendation. Still he fears his work not produced the desired fruit among them.

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### Questions

1. Clearly Paul has poured himself out for a church who is lacking appreciation for his care for them. How do we know when our frustrations with the church or its leadership is constructive versus a result of our spiritual crankiness or our own immaturity?
2. Some aim to not be a bother to anyone, and others are quite comfortable “bothering” other people in order to make things happen. What is Paul's motivation

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to not be a burden but also to expend himself for them? How is that different than your own motivations with respect to how you interact with the church?

3. Paul is afraid of two things when he visits again if he finds sin among Corinth: God will humble him and he will be grieved over a lack of repentance. How is a lack of repentance a source of both humility before God and grief?
4. Consider your own relationship with the church, for indeed it's been a trying few years, do you harbor any of the sins listed in v.20? How might Christ be challenging you to love the church as Paul does?