
To set us up for this morning's message in 2 Corinthians 12. I'd like to first go to 2 Timothy, which is thought to be Paul's final epistle. 2 Timothy 1:8-9.

Paul was a prisoner at Rome, but not for anything criminal or illegal, but for preaching the gospel of Christ! And now, in this time when he was incarcerated, some among his own brethren who began to distance themselves from him for fear of Caesar and the Romans.

Paul wrote this charge to Timothy to NOT BE ASHAMED of the testimony of Christ, because of what's happening to me, because I am imprisoned for preaching the gospel of Christ!

He mentioned (2) men who had turned away from him, who would no longer associate with him because he was incarcerated. (They turned from Christ... and from Paul because he was persecuted for Christ).

2 Timothy 1:15-18, Matthew 13:20-21, Mark 13:9-11, 4:10-18

When persecution comes upon us, then we will find out who will stand with Christ and His people, and who will not! I wanted to read these passages to show you how ALONE Paul was as an apostle, but also as a Christian.

From what Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 4:16-17, when he was called to stand before the magistrate or judge to defend and vindicate himself before Caesar's court, NO ONE WOULD STAND WITH HIM or speak for him, in his behalf or in his defense; HE STOOD ALONE for the cause of Christ.

In 2 Timothy 1:7 Paul encouraged Timothy to NOT be fearful in the ministry: "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."

There will be times in your Christian life when you will feel alone in your stand for Christ, when friends, even supposed brethren may distance themselves from you, when no one will stand with you (or speak for you) because of the fear of men or the governing powers!

But what better place FOR YOU as a Christian, for God to discover His faith in you than when you're forsaken and all alone! Don't forget what Paul wrote 2 Timothy 4:17:

"Though all men forsook me, the Lord did not forsake me or leave me alone, He stood with me, and strengthened me". Mark 14:26-31, John 16:32-33, 2 Corinthians 12:11-19

I think Paul often felt like he was all alone in the ministry, the more I give of myself to you, the less I am loved by you.

Paul was always fending off false teachers and exposing their heresies in the churches, and then, and at the same time, he tirelessly cared for God's people and shepherded

them in God's truth. He was a true and faithful minister of Christ to the people of God.

But I also get the sense that... even among believers in the church @ Corinth, Paul was continually having to prove himself to them when there was so much evidence that God had sent him to preach the gospel to them, and that the power of God was present in his ministry!

2 Corinthians 12:12: "Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought (or accomplished) among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds". 2 Corinthians 13:3

For all that God had wrought among them by the Apostle Paul, he should have been commended by the church! 2 Corinthians 12:11

You should have stood with me, against these false teachers, because you know first-hand the proof of my ministry, even with so much opposition from many enemies of the gospel, STILL, God has done a great work among you in the church!

"For what is it (or HOW were you inferior to other churches?) Except in the fact that I refused to be burdensome to you by taking monetary support from you?"

You were NOT at all inferior to other churches, who had Peter, James (son of Alphaeus, or John) teaching them.

Galatians 2:8-9

But then in his refusing to take their monetary support, Paul asked for their forgiveness, I think the saints felt slighted; why wouldn't Paul take the offerings that they had gathered from the church? They were doing it in obedience to Christ. So again, in this, Paul asked their forgiveness.

And then from (V14-19) we ought to see the Apostle Paul's love and care for the church in the language of a parent!

Once again, Paul insisted that he would not be burdensome to them...and as I thought about this, thinking to not say much about it, (because Paul said so much about it), BUT I thought, WHY was it so important to Paul to keep reiterating this?

I think Paul was setting a distinct and distant MARK between him and his ministry, and the ministry of the false teachers that were among them.

Remember false teachers do nothing free of charge, but they are motivated by covetousness, greed, and fame!

2 Peter 2:1-3, 14-15, Jude 11, Acts 20:33-35

The desire and motivation of the Apostle Paul, and any true minister of Christ will be love of the souls of the people and love to Christ, not the love of their money.

In (V14) Paul told them, I don't seek your money or your stuff, I SEEK YOU and the good of your souls!
"For the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children."

Paul's love for God's people, was like that of a parent for a child. Paul saw himself as their spiritual father, after all, he had "begotten them" through the gospel, and therefore, he "parented them in love" like a father does for his own children. 1 Corinthians 4:14-16

Parents: You don't parent your children for a big pay day that's going to come when your children are all out of the house; you parent them because you love them and want to set them up for life; so, YOU lay up for them and for their good.

Paul gladly parented the church at Corinth as their spiritual father, to equip them and set them toward the "strait gate" that leads to eternal life because he loved them. 2 Corinthians 12:15-16.

2 Corinthians 12:16-19: Paul made his final argument regarding accusations that he USED THEM to receive money from others or other churches.

When you read (Verse 16) on the surface, it appears that Paul is telling them, I did not burden you, but I was crafty and deceitful in that I did take money and support from other churches while ministering to you.

The accusation against Paul was that he used the church at Corinth to make money from the churches of Macedonia.

Understand that (V16) was the accusation of some in the church against Paul. YOU SAY THIS!

THIS PAUL ANSWERED with what "actually happened". (Verse 17-19)

There will be times when you speak the truth, but you will be branded a liar. 2 Corinthians 12:19: "We speak before God in Christ: but we do all things, dearly beloved, for your edifying."

Learn from this passage in 2 Corinthians:

Being a Christian means that there will be times when you will stand alone, times when no one will stand with you in the cause of Christ! When former brethren will no longer associate with you for fear of men. Just remember, God will stand with you! He will never leave you, nor forsake you. Not only is there spiritual warfare outside the church, but there may also arise much spiritual warfare and wrestling within the church! Just know that the author of any strife or contention that arises in the church, will be from the devil's fiery darts, he is the "accuser of our brethren".

This is why it is so important for you to mortify and kill sin out of your life.

The church is the family and household of God; Pastoring is oftentimes like parenting; and it should be.

Finally, they accused Paul of many things that were not true; they called the Lord Jesus a liar and a devil, we should expect to be treated such in the world... The servant is not greater than his Lord! If they hated me, saith Christ, they will also hate you.