

## Exegetical Notes – 2 Corinthians 12:11-21

Prepared by Charles H. Jensen for Cornerstone Fellowship

101 Kylies Road, Coatesville, PA 19320

610-384-1375

[charleshjensen@aol.com](mailto:charleshjensen@aol.com)

### 2 Corinthians 12:11-21

#### Verses 11-13

*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!*

- This is the conclusion of Paul’s defense of his ministry among the Corinthians. This defense began in chapter 10. Paul has been forced to defend himself against “super apostles” who have infiltrated the Corinthian Church and are leading the people there into theological error. These “super apostles” present a different Gospel and a different Jesus than does Paul, but many in the Corinthian Church have followed them.
- Paul claims that he demonstrated the gifts of his Apostleship among the Corinthians. He even did signs, wonders, and miracles among them by the grace of God. These were supernatural acts which demonstrated that he was telling them the truth and pointing them to God. The “super apostles” were, apparently, not able to do these things. It is interesting to note that the signs do not impress those who oppose Paul and want to discredit him.
- Paul says that he gave the Corinthian Church everything that was given to all of the other Churches to which he ministered. They were not shortchanged by him in any way except that he took no financial support from them in the years he was with them (see 2 Corinthians 11:7-12).
- Some scholars argue that this not taking support is the chief accusation of the “super apostles.” Paul was taking an offering for the distressed churches in Jerusalem (see 2 Corinthians 9). It may have been that the “super apostles” were questioning Paul’s motives in taking the offering for Jerusalem by saying that he was taking the money for himself rather than

the stated cause. This is not stated explicitly in the text. However, there is support for the suggestion implicitly. There is some concern here about the way Paul handles finances. The “super apostles” seem to be raising accusations that things were not sound financially in Corinth. Beware of those who concentrate on finances instead of trusting God to provide. Their eyes are on the wrong thing. They seek to divide, not to point to the provision of God. God is working to provide for the church even in hard times. Through Paul’s efforts, God is even working to provide for the impoverished churches in Jerusalem.

### **Verses 14-16**

***<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!***

- Paul is now preparing to return to Corinth again.
- Again, he will not accept any financial support from them while he is with them. He is not after their money and will not change his behavior because of any accusations. He will continue to do what he has done.
- Paul contends that he is their spiritual father. He will care for his children as any good father cares for his children. In this, he asks a sarcastic question. “If I love you more, will you love me less?” Though he expends himself and his resources on the Corinthians, he is criticized by some of them for doing so. The comment, “Be that as it may,” is Paul’s way of throwing his hands in the air. There is nothing more to be said on this subject.
- But the accusations still come from some that he is “crafty” and has caught the Corinthians by “trickery.” He is exploiting the Corinthians because he does not take money from them, they say.

### **Verses 17-18**

***<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?***

- Those Paul sent to Corinth were of the same mind and spirit as was he. None of them took money from that church.

## Verses 19-21

***<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.***

- Paul wants the Corinthians to understand that, before God, he has done all that he has done in Corinth to strengthen them and to deepen their faith in Jesus. However, he is not convinced that they fully understand that.
- He is afraid that his pending visit to them will not be pleasant (see 2 Corinthians 10:6). Paul knows that unless the Corinthians are completely dependent on God, their obedience to God will be incomplete. If they are not completely dependent on God, they will continue to reject his guidance. They will not see Paul as he is, God's true servant, and he will find them unrepentant. The result will be further division in the church. There will be arguments, anger, wrong motives, improper and unfounded accusations, gossip, and anger. These behaviors will cause disorder.
- Paul fears that he will be humbled before God because God will see that Paul has failed to deliver the Corinthians to Christ as a "pure and spotless bride" (see 2 Corinthians 11:2). He is afraid that he will discover that many in the Corinthian Church are as worldly as ever they were. He is afraid that he will find they did not truly repent of sinful behaviors but still practice them.

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon based on 2 Corinthians 12:11-21. They have been prepared by the Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen. All rights are reserved by Cornerstone Fellowship & the Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen. They are used here by permission.)