

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Concerns of a True Pastor: Humility and Selflessness

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 12:12-16

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Concerns of a True Pastor: Humility and Selflessness

Well this morning in our time in the Word of God, we return to 2 Corinthians chapter 12 as we rapidly, I trust, come to the conclusion of this great epistle. I don't feel particularly compelled to justify the length at which we have spent time on this epistle, it is the word of the living God and every word of God is pure. But I want to share with you that there are some compelling reasons that have caused me to dig so deeply into this letter.

The first one is that it's had such a profound effect upon my own life. It is a letter that surfaces for us the heart attitude primarily of the apostle Paul. From beginning to end we're really grappling with Paul's attitudes. And apart from the Lord Jesus Christ, Paul is my spiritual hero, kind of the model for me to follow and it has been a tremendous, tremendous experience for me to have spent all this time dealing with this epistle because it has taken me so deeply into the mind and the heart of this great man, the apostle Paul. So I confess a somewhat personal interest in this book which has compelled me to deal with it at the pace that I've dealt with it. And I even feel a little reluctant to leave it behind because it has been such a...such a purging and cleansing experience in my own heart.

Secondly, I believe that it is such a necessary book for other preachers and teachers and church leaders to understand that I have wanted to preach it carefully because I'm full...fully aware of the fact that what I preach here winds up on tape and gets spread all over the country by way of radio and tapes and as well around the world. And there are messages that this book is just loaded with that are essential for men who are in ministry who need to understand what it is that God has called them to by way of heart attitude and commitment.

It is also true that out of this will come a commentary on 2 Corinthians and when I have been going through this book I have found help from various places, but I've not found one single book that really seems to capture the full rich essence of what Paul is saying here in terms of the heart of the minister. And so I felt it's very important to be diligent so we can provide a resource for others that will be indeed helpful in their understanding of this book and its application to their own ministry.

So for those reasons I have dwelt on this book at length and as I said, I'm even reluctant to let it go, but it shall be the case in a few weeks. This morning we come into chapter 12 to verse 12 and following. These are Paul's sort of wrap-up thoughts all the way to the end of chapter 13. And what he says here is not material that is unfamiliar to us, it's sort of material that is familiar to us, things that he has indicated already in 2 Corinthians or for certain in other epistles that he has written.. The things that reveal his heart, here is kind of a sampler of the attitudes of Paul's heart, here is a summation of his own concerns. That's why I'm calling this section "The Faithful Pastors Concerns," I don't know what else to call it because that's really what it is. And he starts sharing those concerns there in our text where we'll begin in verse 12 and they run really all the way down through verse 10 of chapter 13. It's just an un-baring of his own heart. It's a very personal section, as most of this epistle has been. And as I said, it's very much of a summary of the attitudes that he has had that have been so instructive for all of us.

Now, just to give you a backdrop for this section, keep in mind what we've said all the way through this study of 2 Corinthians, false teachers have come into the city of Corinth and they've torn up the church and created all kinds of problems. The people have bought into their deception and their lies which, of course, has brought great grief upon the heart of Paul. So what you have in the backdrop of this whole epistle is these false teachers against which Paul is comparing his own right view of ministry because they obviously represent completely the wrong view.

When I sat down and just started writing out characteristics of false teachers, these are the things that showed up on my list. Pride, selfishness, deception, irreverence, and destruction. Those...those would be probably the first five features of false teachers that would be on my list of say a dozen or so characteristics...pride, selfishness, deception, irreverence and destructiveness or destruction.

False teachers are proud. They are concerned for their own popularity. They're concerned for their own fame. They're concerned for their own notoriety. They're concerned for their own prestige. They're concerned to see themselves and hear themselves in the public eye. They want large crowds, as it were, to bow down in great homage to them. They're characterized by pride. And they will do anything to gain the ground they need to gain for the welfare of their own personal ego, including any amount of compromise necessary.

Secondly, false teachers are characterized by selfishness. They tend to be self-centered. They are concerned for their own comfort. They are concerned for their own popularity. They're concerned for their own prosperity. In the end, it's all about money, fame and prestige and notoriety equals an increased bank account. And they are in it for the money and the personal, material benefits that they can gain as they endeavor to feed their selfish desires.

Thirdly, they are characterized by deception. And they usually can weave a very sophisticated web of deception in their teaching because they tend to be articulate if they're going to be successful. And they endeavor to engage other people to aid them in their deceitful enterprise which gives it the...the sort of facade of credibility.

They're not only proud and selfish and deceptive, but thirdly [fourthly] they are irreverent. If there's anything that sort of dominates in my thinking about false teachers, it is their irreverence. They have absolutely no regard for God. I mean, the fact that they would go against God, that they would elevate themselves the way they do, that they would pervert the truth indicates their utter irreverence. They have little if any regard for God, His Word, His truth, His glory, His honor.

And finally, they are spiritually destructive. They seek to use people, they seek to abuse people. They seek to lead people into error which destroys them, into sin which pollutes them.

So as you look at false teachers, with regard to the world, they are proud and they seek fame and popularity. With regard to themselves, they are self-centered, selfish, self-aggrandizing, self-gratifying. With regard to the nature of their ministry, they are dishonest and deceptive and lack integrity. With regard to God, they are utterly irreverent. In fact, they are blasphemous. And with regard to the people that they influence, they are spiritually destructive. So their relationship to the world, their relationship to the ministry, their relationship to themselves, their relationship to God, their relationship to their people all reflects the deviation of their hearts.

On the other hand, if you were to write a list of characteristics of the true minister, a true pastor, a true shepherd, a true preacher, faithful pastor, you would start by saying he is humble. And then you probably would say he is lovingly sacrificial, instead of selfish. He is honest and has integrity rather than deceptive. And he is reverent and worships and honors God, rather than being irreverent. And he is spiritually strengthening and edifying. And you would be right.

Remember now, Paul is writing in defining his own attitudes here against the background of these false teachers whose attitudes should have become obvious to the people in Corinth. A faithful pastor is humble, unselfish, honest, reverent and spiritually edifying...just the opposite of false teachers.

Now as Paul un-bares his inmost feelings in this final summary of his attitudes, we find out that the character of the man is really discerned by what is inside of him. You find out more about a person by their attitudes than you do their actions. Obviously people with right attitudes will have right actions, but sometimes people with right actions don't have right attitudes. But when you get into the heart of Paul, you find out the character of this man and it is golden character. Everything he says about

himself here stands in stark contrast to what is characteristic of false teachers.

Now the passage, to just take one word and sum it up, the passage is really filled with affection. It is an affectionate passage. You feel his great love for the Corinthians here. It's a very warm passage. There's a lot of *pathos* here. There's a...there's a demonstration of clear affection for these people in this passage as we touch the heart of the apostle Paul. Let's look at these five categories that I mentioned to you.

First of all, with regard to the world, a false teacher is concerned about fame and prestige because he's driven by pride. But with regard to the world, Paul's concern was humble faithfulness...faithfulness. He was humble enough that all he wanted was to be faithful. He was concerned about the honor of God, not the honor of Paul. He was concerned about doing God's will God's way no matter what the price. That's indicated to us in just one little reference in verse 12, we've already discussed verse 12, we won't go back into it in detail, but it says, "The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance by signs, wonders and miracles." We talked about that. But draw that little phrase "with all perseverance" out and you have basically his constant attitude with regard to the world. When it came to the world it's very easy to sum up how they treated Paul, in a word, persecution. They were hostile to Paul, they hated him. They resented him. They rejected him. And ultimately they beheaded him. But through it all, through all of his ministry he maintained his faithfulness, that's bound up in the word "perseverance," *hupomeno...hupomonein* the Greek, it means to get under something and stay there, to remain under. And he remained under hostility and persecution his whole ministry. From the very time of his conversion and he first began to preach there was hatred, hostility, people vilified him and wanted him dead. All his ministry long there were plots to kill him by the Jews and hostility and a desire to have him dead even by the Gentiles as well. And so that little phrase "with all perseverance" identifies his attitude of humble faithfulness. He just persevered, humbly took whatever came.

This, too, remember, was a sign of his true apostleship. Remember in John 15 and John 16, the gospel of John, Jesus when He was calling His apostles said, "They hated Me, they're going to hate you. They persecuted Me, they're going to persecute you. They're going to hate your message the same way they hated Mine. They're going to think they're doing God a service when they throw you out of the synagogue and when they put you in prison and when they kill you. And in the world you're going to have it very difficult, you're going to have tribulation, " John 16:33. So it was really a sign of genuine apostleship, it was a sign that man was a faithful preacher that he was persecuted. All the miraculous signs that Paul indicates in verse 12 he worked, all the miracles and signs and wonders that he did, all of his preaching, all of his teaching, all of his church planting, all the ministry of building leaders, all of that was done under constant duress. All of it was done under relentless persecution.

And that's why he said he died daily, every single day he woke up he had the thought...This could be the day I die...because there were so many plots, there were so many hostile people, there were so many people who wanted him dead. Every day of his life could have been his last day because of the attitude of persecution. There was never any let up in his suffering.

We won't take the time but in this epistle alone you know, if you've heard the series, starting in chapter 1 verse 3 he talks about affliction and the God of all comfort, comforting him in his affliction. Talks about his sorrow, his tears in chapter 2. You come to chapter 4 he talks about his suffering in very beautiful prosaic terms. You come to chapter 6, he talks about his suffering. You come to chapter 7 he talks about it again and about his depression. You come to chapter 10 he talks about it, chapter 11 he gives a list of all the things he suffered under persecution. Chapter 12 he talks about his thorn in the flesh, a messenger from Satan and in verse 10 persecutions, distress, insult, difficulties and so forth. So it's just a theme all the way through this epistle. The man under went endless suffering because of persecution.

In Acts chapter 20 he said, "I'm going to Jerusalem and I've heard that I'm going to be bound there and I'm going to be made a prisoner but none of those things move me because I don't count my life dear to myself, I just want to finish the ministry Christ has given me." That was his goal. He was not a proud man. He was an eminently humble man and all he wanted to do was what God gave him to do and it didn't matter what suffering came along with it.

Now this fits the pattern of an apostle. If you go back into the gospels you will remember that no sooner had our Lord set His disciples apart for their ministry then He immediately spoke about their suffering. In Matthew chapter 5 there as we talk about the Beatitudes we'll be reminded of this. He sits with His disciples on the Sermon on the Mount, He unfolds spiritual truth, He gets into the Beatitudes. It all sounds wonderful. You know, He's promising riches. He's promising the Kingdom. He's promising they will be full and they will be blessed. And at the end of the Beatitudes He says, "By the way, you're going to be persecuted...you're going to be persecuted, you're going to be hated, you're going to be rejected for My sake. Count it all joy when that happens because that's the way it's always been for the prophets."

I mean, the bottom line is the world usually is against the true servants of Jesus Christ. If they're not for a given period of time, there's a sort of a momentary peace but it can't last. Robert Harris, years ago, wrote, "No sooner is a man a true minister but he is half a martyr," end quote. Our Lord gave His disciples their orders with one hand and promised them their persecution on the other hand. He did this in Luke chapter 9. He gave them power to heal. He gave them power to cast out demons. And He turned right around and said, "Now when they don't accept you and you leave, shake the dust off your

feet." He called them to preach in Matthew chapter 10 and then warned them immediately that they would be persecuted. He just re-instituted Peter in John 21 back into the ministry and in verse 18 He says, "By the way, Peter, you're going to die for the cause of the gospel." In Acts chapter 9 Paul was called into the ministry and immediately told how many things he would suffer at the hands of people because of his preaching the gospel.

This isn't anything new. Jeremiah chapter 1 verses 17, 19, the great prophet Jeremiah who became a synonym for suffering and a synonym for tears was told at the very outset of his ministry that he was going to suffer. Ezekiel chapter 2 verse 6, the great prophet Ezekiel became a proverb for pain. Daniel himself was considered a traitor and a rebel against the king and thrown into the lion's den to be eaten alive. That's the way it's been. Old Testament prophets, New Testament apostles were all promised persecution and suffering. John the Baptist who falls sort of in the middle...John the Baptist preached and drew the huge crowds out to him at the Jordan River but eventually his message was intolerable and his head was chopped off and put on a plate and served up at a party for everybody to laugh at. And Jesus Christ, the most noble of all the preachers that God ever sent was Himself executed at the hands of those He came to save. The fact is, persecution attends the preaching of the message of God's truth.

And that really flows from three causes...one is God, that's right. I believe God is behind persecution. It pleases God for His own excellent purposes to test His preachers and to test their faithfulness, to strengthen them. It pleases God to break their pride, to humble them, to divest them of self-confidence, to sever them from the love of popularity, to pull them in intimacy to Himself in a certain amount of desperation as they suffer. It pleases God to refine His own preachers. He may even...He may even let a messenger from Satan loose on His own preachers, as He says He does Paul here in verse 7 of the same chapter. So persecution comes from the plan and purpose of God.

Secondly, we should expect it from the world. The world is this system of evil, the *kosmos*, the system of evil that exists that is antipathy against God, it's everything the Kingdom of God is not, it's for everything the Kingdom of God is against. The difference between the Kingdom of God and the world is the difference between light and darkness, fire and water. God and Satan are at great opposition. They are enemies and that is played out in the world because the world is Satan's domain. And so we would expect the world to persecute the true preacher. Why? Because the true preacher preaches the message from God to the world, it detects sin, it disgraces the sinner, it opposes the sins in which the world indulges and then pronounces eternal doom on a world of sinners. That's not a popular message. Because preachers have the message of God against all sin, they are viewed as the enemy of every indulgent sinner.

And then thirdly, from the perspective of Satan we would expect persecution. Satan is the one who is behind the world system. He hates God and he knows that he needs to persecute God's preachers. He knows that if you destroy the shepherd you can scatter the sheep. So he endeavors to smite the shepherd so that the sheep can be scattered. If he can destroy the general of the army, the army will be routed.

And so God allows for persecution because of its refinement. The world throws up waves upon waves of persecution because it hates the message the preacher preaches. And even Satan himself, I believe, sets an aggressive attack the preachers of the truth in order to bring them down and that will have a devastating effect upon their flock. In all these ways then, and from all these perspectives, persecution is inevitable. It is reality that we who deal faithfully with the truth of God and the souls of men will be maligned and/or assaulted. He who speaks God's truth will be considered the enemy of all who hate God's truth.

On the other hand, false prophets are just the opposite. They deceive people. They dupe people. They literally damn people destructively by their lies and they are received with open arms and they're applauded because they're really part of the world's system. They're emissaries of Satan. They're ambassadors of Satan who runs the world system so they're in perfect partnership with it. But the work of the Christian ministry, the work of the gospel is to show people their sin, is to pull them from hell and lead them to heaven. And that makes hostility with people who love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil and love their sin. Because ministers of Jesus Christ would make unholy men holy, because ministers of Jesus Christ would make wicked men righteous, they are hated.

It was interesting, that article that was in USA Today last week had the six preachers, a guy sent me a little clipping on it, and I don't know if I mentioned this to you but it simply says, a little note, "Thank you for what you said in USA Today. The word sin and forgiveness-MacArthur five, everybody else zero. And that's very typical. That is our message. Our message is about sin and forgiveness, but even people within the church are afraid to confront the world with that message because they understand the implications and the implications are hostility. Such is the wickedness of sin and men hate the truth and they hate the light and they therefore hate the bearer of the truth and the bearer of the light, including even Jesus Christ.

So we're like sheep among wolves. That's just how it is. We don't seek to be combative, we go forth as harmless as doves. We go forth with kindness. We go forth with gentleness. We go forth with meekness and humility and a great amount of love. But nonetheless we create animosity.

Let me say something very important. It must be...it must be that the only thing men object to in us is the disturbing message of the gospel of Jesus Christ. That's very important to say. It must be that the only thing men object to in us is the disturbing message of the gospel of Jesus Christ. They should not be assaulting our character. They should not be objecting to our attitude because we're unloving or lack grace or mercy or kindness. If they're going to object then let it be that they object to the disturbing message of the gospel of Jesus Christ and nothing else. If we're to be hated, then we're to be hated for the gospel's sake, we're to be hated for Christ's sake. And that was Paul and it called for perseverance, called for endurance, it called for a humble faithfulness, staying faithful, unwaveringly, unfailingly faithful to the gospel at any price. And the price was great for him, a lifetime of suffering. We don't seek popularity, we seek to be humbly faithful and that's what Paul meant when he said in 1 Corinthians chapter 4, "It's a small thing what men say about me, that's not an issue with me." Just as in Acts 20, "I don't really care what happens to this body, those things don't move me, I just want to do what God's called me to do.

So God's ministers are generally going to be hated by the world. God's ministers therefore must look for their reward not here, but in heaven. You can't be looking for your reward here, you have to be looking for it in heaven. Here is the work and heaven is the wages. Here is the effort and heaven is the honor. Here is the sacrifice and heaven is the reward. Here is the seed time and heaven is the harvest. Here is the battle and heaven is the rest. Here is the cross and heaven is the crown. It must be in heaven or nowhere that God's servants are going to be fittingly rewarded. I mean, this world can't reward us because they don't have anything of value to give us. And they won't reward us because they hate our message.

Isaiah understood it, that faithful Old Testament preacher. Isaiah 49 says it as well as it can be said. Listen to what it says in Isaiah 49 and verse 4, "But I said, I have toiled in vain, I have spent My strength for nothing and vanity." What did I get out of it? "Yet surely the justice due to Me is with the Lord and My reward is with My God." That's the perspective. Then verse 5, "And now says the Lord who formed Me from the womb to be His Servant, to bring Jacob back to Him in order that Israel might be gathered to Him, for I am honored in the sight of the Lord and My God is My strength." Isaiah was saying that but it was also messianic.

Isaiah was mistreated and said his reward is in heaven, and Jesus was mistreated and knew that His reward would be in heaven when He was exalted to the right hand of the Father. Again I say it, it is in heaven or nowhere that God's servants will be faithfully rewarded. The world can't reward us because they don't have anything of value to give us. They don't have anything that lasts. They don't have anything eternal. And they won't because they resent the message. The men in the world, the people of the world are more apt to pay for their doctor who heals their bodies and pay well than the preachers who seek to heal their eternal souls.

I want to say this in kindness, but physicians are overvalued and preachers are undervalued. Preachers are physicians of little or no value, yet their work is the only work that is eternal. And God will some day reward it. Now in the meantime the church does provide a nice wage until our eternal reward. Paul in 1 Corinthians 9:13 and 14 says, "Those who preach the gospel should get their living by their preaching." And that is to say the church should support those who are its leaders. The elders that are over you who are faithful in the preaching and teaching, Paul told Timothy, should be given appropriate remuneration and care. That's a wonderful thing that the Lord does for us but our real reward is in heaven because God is the only one who knows the true nature of our ministry because God alone knows our motives. That's why Paul said, "God will reward us when the secrets of the heart are revealed. God knows the full extent of our ministry, God alone knows that. And our real reward comes in glory. False teachers work for earthly exaltation, true preachers work for heavenly exaltation. False preachers work to fulfill their pride here. True preachers are glad to be humble and faithful here and receive the glory that is yet to be given to them in the presence of God. So, Paul's attitude with regard to the world was a concern to simply persevere faithfully and humbly with the message in light of heavenly reward. False teachers want popularity and fame and they want it now and they make any compromise necessary to get it.

Secondly, not only with regard to the world did Paul reveal his attitude here in that perseverance, but with regard to himself, how did he view himself? His concern was not self-fulfillment, self-aggrandizement, selfishness but sacrifice. That's the best word, I think. His concern with regard to the world was to be humbly faithful, his concern here was to be sacrificially selfless. And this is in verses 13 to 16 and this is the only one we'll have time to cover, we'll finish the rest next Lord's day. But in verse 13 he says, "For what respect were you treated as inferior to the rest of the churches, except that I myself didn't become a burden to you? Forgive me this wrong! Here for this third time I am ready to come to you and I'll not be a burden to you; for I do not seek what is yours, but you; for children are not responsible to save up for their parents but parents for their children. And I will most gladly spend and be expended for your souls. If I love you the more, am I to be loved the less? Be that as it may, I did not burden you myself;" stop at that point.

False teachers take advantage of people. They literally manipulate them, intimidate them so they can get anything and everything the people have to give. They want to strip them as naked as they can strip them, get their money, get whatever they can from them to benefit themselves. But true teachers are the opposite. They are by commitment selfless and sacrificial. The false teacher is selfish, the true servant of God is utterly unselfish. And he says this reminding the Corinthians in verse 13, "In what respect were you treated as inferior to the rest of the churches?" You know, this is another one of those ridiculous accusations that the false teachers had made against Paul. They say, "Well, you

know, you've got a substandard ministry here, folks. I mean you've just got a substandard ministry. You've got this man named Paul who wrongfully claims to be an apostle who is an imposter, who has a secret life of shame, who is a liar and deceiver and he comes in and what you got was substandard, inferior to the other churches founded by us and other true apostles." That's what the false apostles, no doubt, said. They said the poor Corinthians were suffering under substandard foundation, that the beginning had been bad. They had...they had received a fake and consequently his ministry was inferior, he was a poor substitute for a true apostle and he brought a poor substitute for real truth and real power from God.

Paul here denies that. He denies it in verse 12, "The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance by signs and wonders and miracles. For in what respect were you treated as inferior to the rest of the churches?" In other words, he says...Look, you saw the miracles, the signs, the wonders, the mighty miracles that were done there, so how is it that you can buy into the lie that you had an inferior ministry from a sub-apostle? You weren't cheated. All the churches that Paul founded were founded with God's truth and God's power.

Then he turns the corner. He says, "The only thing that you didn't get was a bill." Verse 13, "Except that I myself didn't become a burden to you." I just didn't charge you. That's the only thing you didn't get. You got all the power, you got the signs, the wonders, the miracles. You got the truth. I came and I preached the true gospel to you. The only thing you didn't get was a bill. Paul had determined from the start not to burden the Corinthians with paying his support and the support of those who traveled with him. Perhaps it was a poor church to start with. Perhaps he wanted...and I think this is more primary...he wanted to avoid the stigma that was attached to false teachers who were all in it for the money and got as much money out of everybody as they could. And Paul knew he could be easily lumped with all the rest of the false teachers if he operated the way they operated. And even though...according to 1 Corinthians 9:13 to 15...had told the Corinthians in his first letter that he had a right to be supported if he preached the gospel and that every soldier fights because he's paid and every farmer expects to take in the crop and so should every preacher expect support. He made that clear. Even though he had a right to that, he had disdained that right because he didn't want to make the gospel chargeable. He did not want to be subject to any unjust criticism and he didn't want to get lumped in with the false teachers.

In chapter 11 you remember in verse 7 he said, "I preach the gospel of God to you without charge." And then he says sort of a...in the hyperbolic way, "I robbed other churches taking wages from them to serve you." Other churches had to support him so he didn't have to ask anything from the Corinthians. "When I was present with you," verse 9, "and in need, I wasn't a burden to anyone." Apparently there were some times there when he didn't have enough money for food and the basics of life and he never brought it up. He waited till some brethren came from Macedonia who fully supplied my need. And he said, "I haven't changed anything and I will continue to do this," at the end of verse 9. "I'm not going to change anything."

Why am I doing this? Verse 11, "Because I don't love you...?" No. "God knows I do." You know what the false teachers said, "You know, he doesn't take any money. You know why? Two reasons, reason number one he doesn't take money from you, his ministry is worthless and he understands that. And he's not about to put a price on something that has no value. Secondly," they said, "the reason he doesn't take any money from you is because he doesn't want any obligation to you because he doesn't love you and if you give him money then he's obligated to you and he doesn't care about you and doesn't want that obligation."

So they said...the reason he doesn't take your money is because he loves you so little, because he puts no value on his ministry in the first place and he puts no value on you either, that's why he doesn't take any money. They lied about him every way they could think of. But the bottom line is, he never changed...he never took anything in spite of their lies. He never changed his pattern.

So back to chapter 12 verse 13, he says, "I myself did not become a burden to you, not from the beginning." He preached the gospel without charge and even when he was in need he waited till somebody else came from the outside to support that need. He didn't want...he didn't want to be misjudged, he didn't want to be misrepresented, didn't want to give fuel to people who would criticize him for this. And when they said he did it because he didn't value his ministry, or he did it because he didn't love them, they were lying but he still didn't change. He did love them and he expressed it in a myriad of ways. He says to them, "The only thing you didn't receive..." now they're lying and say you've got a substandard ministry, "Let me tell you, you saw the signs and wonders and miracles, the only thing you didn't get was you didn't get charged." And then sarcastically he says at the end of verse 13, "Forgive me this wrong!" Now that is very strong rebuke to become sarcastic. He treats them with a deserved sarcasm. He did the same thing in verse 11 at the end of the verse, he says, "Though I'm a nobody..." That too is a sarcastic reflection of their attitude.

His attitude toward them was one of selflessness. He never wanted anything from them. He never asked them for anything. He went without. He was deprived. Until somebody from the outside brought him support, he didn't have anything. And he never wanted a thing from them. His attitude toward himself was...he was willing to be a sacrifice. He was willing to be that living sacrifice that he wrote about to the Romans.

Verse 14, he continues to talk about this. "Here for this third time I'm ready to come to you and I will not be a burden to you." I'm not going to change anything. From the very beginning, the first time he came as recorded in Acts 18, he came to Corinth and he preached the gospel and he planted a church and he stayed there twenty months or so. That was the first time. The second time he came was a painful, sorrowful visit referred to in chapter 2 verse 1 as when he came and found himself in sorrow. It's also referred to in chapter 13 verse 2, "I have previously said when present the second

time." So he had two prior visits.

The first one he came, founded the church. The second one, he came back because he was in such sadness and sorrow over what he had heard. And after that second visit, he went back and wrote to the Corinthians to try to address the issues there. Now he's saying, "I'm coming for a third time." The third visit is imminent. And the false teachers would, no doubt, have said, "Oh he's coming, so now it's going to be cash time. I mean, he's buttered you up and he's played you for the fool all the way along in taking nothing, now he's coming a third time and he's going to come and get everything he can get." So just to make sure that doesn't fly, he says before he's going to go, "I will not be a burden to you, nothing will change...nothing will change." And this is just irritating to the false teachers because they're just milking them for everything they can get. They're just emptying their pockets at every turn and he refuses to do that.

Why? He tells them. Verse 14, "For I do not seek what is yours, but you." Boy, that is so good. Peter said that false teachers are in it for filthy lucre, not true shepherds. Paul didn't want anything they had. He just wanted them. He just wanted them for the Kingdom. He wanted them for God. He wanted their lives for obedience. He wanted their lives for righteousness, holiness. He wanted their lives for the glory of God. That's the pure selflessness of the true pastor. He doesn't want anything from them, he wants them. He's concerned about them, not what they have, not what they possess. And he gives an analogy which illustrates his point, "For children are not responsible to save up for their parents but parents for their children." Of course, the Corinthians were his spiritual children. First Corinthians 1 verses...1 Corinthians 4, rather, verses 14 and 15 Paul calls them his spiritual children. "You have not many fathers, I only have begotten you in the gospel," he says. They were his spiritual children. And he's just using a simple universal axiom, parents take care of their children. I'm not asking anything from you, I am a willing parent wanting to provide for his beloved children. This is my joyous privilege.

I understand that as a parent. That has never been reluctant that...it's never been with reluctance that I have provided for my children. It still is not. Anything I can ever provide for them or my grandchildren or anyone else who is beyond my own family, an object of my own personal love, devotion, that is always a joy. That...we understand that and Paul is saying, "Look, you're my children...I'm...I'm your parent, this is something I have rejoiced to do as any parent would do it."

It's interesting to note there children are not responsible to save up for their parents but parents for their children. And it's a good indication that parents are to save up for their children. That is to say...Parents, you should have a...you should have a savings account, you should have resources to provide for the needs of your children. The word "save up" is *thesaurizo* from which the word in

English thesaurus comes from, which means a treasury. And we should have a treasury out of which we can provide for the needs of our children. Paul used that same word in 1 Corinthians 16:2 when he told the church to collect a treasury of money that could be given as a love gift to the church at Jerusalem. So Paul is simply saying...Look, I was never a burden to you, my approach personally is to be a sacrifice, I want to be a living sacrifice, I live my life self-selflessly, I work with my own hands...as he told the Thessalonians to...to...to work with leather and to make tents and whatever else he made with leather and fabric...I do what I do according to my trade to earn my living and the living of everybody who travels with me. I don't want to be a burden to anybody. I don't seek anything that you have. I don't want anything from you, I just want you."

And verse 15, he sums it up. "How far will you go, Paul? I mean, where's the end of this? How far are you going to go in being sacrificial?"

I'll tell you how far. "I will most gladly spend and be expended for your souls." That's a wonderful statement in the original language. "I will most gladly" is a superlative adjective expressing elation. We would use..we would say today, "I am thrilled, I am overjoyed, I am blessed out of my socks to do this." It's an...it's an...it's a superlative adjective expressing elation. I'm ecstatic about the opportunity to...what?...to spend. Some of you say, "I can buy...I can identify with that." Well this is spending on somebody else, not you. He says, "I'm ecstatic, I'm elated to spend," now the word here, *dapanao* in the Greek, means to spend money freely, to just spend money freely. It's used in Mark 5:26, Luke 15:14, Acts 21:24 and that's what it means. It means to just spend money freely. He said, "I'm just glad to just spend...I'm exhilarated to spend...how much you going to spend?...and be expended," that's another form of *dapanao*, *ekdapanao* which means to be completely spent. What he's saying is, "I am completely happy to spend freely everything I have for you until I'm completely out." The idea of that word is to be exhaust...to be exhausted, to have literally spent it all. He's saying, "I will spend everything I have until I have nothing left for you."

To the Roman Christians he said of the Jews in Romans 9:3, "He could wish himself accursed for the salvation of his brethren," the Jews. He would almost be willing to spend his salvation if it could get somebody else saved, that's an incredible statement. To the Philippians he said, "I am willing to be offered as a sacrifice on the service of your faith." Getting the gospel to you may cost me my life, that's fine. He was like his Lord who came not to be ministered unto but to minister and give his life a ransom for many, Mark 10:45 says. The man would literally spend everything he had. What does that mean? Money, time, strength, energy, everything, he'd spend it all until it's all spent and he has nothing left for the sake of their souls, it says. That's what he meant in verse 14 when he said, "I don't seek what is yours, but you." What do you mean "you"? Your souls, verse 15, your eternal souls for the Kingdom of God. This is just the absolute opposite of false teachers, the absolute opposite. They

just want to spend and spend and spend on themselves. Paul who had very little wanted to spend everything he had, including his own life, on others because he was so committed to their eternal souls.

And then at the end of verse 15 he gives this pathetic statement. "If I love you the more, am I to be loved the less?" Is this what I get? If I keep loving you more and more and more by spending more and more and expending more and more until by the end of...of his life he must have been a man who was literally battered and beaten and abused, as he went on spending more and more on their behalf, they were responding inversely. The more affection he gave them, the less they returned. The whole relation was going backward. He was spending more and they were giving less. The more he gave, the less they loved. He said, "Is this what I get? Is this what...is this the answer for my sacrifice?" That's filled with emotion, it's filled with *pathos*. Frankly, the only thing he wanted from them was their love. The only thing he wanted from them was appreciation of the gospel, appreciation of the message. He didn't want any money. Didn't want any stuff. Didn't want any notoriety. He just wanted them to love him because they appreciated his message. And instead of being loved more, he was being loved less. Is this the thanks I get?

Now that could...that could make you a little bit depressed. But look what he says in verse 16. "Be that as it may," I like that. Well, so what, in spite of their unreturned, unrequited love, in spite of their lack of appreciation for his endless sacrifices, they didn't even appreciate the fact that the man lived as it were every day as if it were his last, realized he could die, that he was going from one potential execution to another. They didn't care about that. In spite of their lack of appreciation, he says to them in verse 16, "Be that as it may, I did not burden you myself." Nothing changed, I still was not a burden to you. Whatever was your attitude, he didn't change. Selfless, sacrifice was his heart. As their love grew less, his did not. In spite of their diffidence, in spite of their coldness, in spite of their accusations, in spite of their disaffection, in spite of their disloyalty and rebellion, he continued sacrificially to love them and never wanted anything from them. And even after all this man had endured and was coming now for a third visit, he was making sure they knew he wanted nothing but their souls.

You see, the legitimacy of Paul's claim to apostleship is really marked out here. How do we know he was a true epist...apostle writing this epistle? How do we know he was the real thing? Well obviously because of the signs and wonders and mighty deeds, we talked about those. Obviously because of all the suffering that he had endured with perseverance. But also because of this tremendous attitude of self sacrifice so foreign to false teachers, which are characterized through the Scripture, always as being self-centered. False teachers want popularity and fame. True preachers are willing to be humbly faithful. False teachers want comfort and prosperity and they want everybody to sacrifice to

make them prosperous. True teachers will make whatever sacrifice is necessary for the souls of the sheep.

Well that takes us to a third perspective, a third concern of the true pastor. With regard to the world, he was humble and faithful. With regard to himself, he was selfless and sacrificial. What about with regard to his ministry? How he viewed the ministry itself. The false teachers are characterized by deception, his concern was honesty and integrity. And we'll leave that for next time. Let's pray.

Father, again we thank You for the vividness of Your Word, how the apostle Paul comes alive to us in this context and we thank You for the applicability, the practicality of it. It helps us discern from the true from the false. We thank You, God, that the pattern has been set so clearly for us because we are called to the same thing...just...just as the congregation as Christian people, we're called to humble faithfulness, uncompromising, persevering, enduring faith. We're called to suffer hostilities and persecution and it's so important that true preachers manifest these attitudes as Paul does so that we can see how we are to live as well. And, Lord, we're to be selflessly sacrificial, not trying to use everyone for our own gain but being consumed with spending our own lives for the sake of the eternal souls of others. It's no different for us than any. The preacher is to model these things so that we can all follow. We thank You again for this example and this clear Word, we ask that You would grant to us these wonderful virtues that we might be an honor to Your name, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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