

***“Spend & Be Spent!”***  
***2 Corinthians 12:11-15***

**Introduction:**

1. Please Turn Back In Your Bibles With Me:
  - To 2 Corinthians:
    - As We Get Back To Our Series On This Remarkable Letter:
      - Of The Apostle Paul!
        - And Even Though We Only Have A Few Weeks Left:
          - There Is Still So Much For Us To Look At & Learn From These Inspired Words!
2. As We Get Back To:
  - Chapter 12 - We Need To Remember:
    - That Paul Was In The Process Of Defending Himself:
      - As A True Apostle:
        - Of Jesus Christ - Who Was Used By God In A Special Way:
          - To Establish The Church In That Ancient, Cosmopolitan City Of Corinth!
  - And So - For A While:
    - He Felt Like He Had To “Play The Same Game” That:
      - The False Teachers Were Playing:
        - Which He Described Back In 10:12:
          - Where They Were “Measuring Themselves By Themselves, And Comparing Themselves Among Themselves!”
            - Which, Of Course, Was “Not Wise!”
3. But - As It Turns Out:
  - There Really *Was* No Comparison:
    - Between Paul - A True Apostle:
      - And Those False Apostles!
        - And So - Paul Wants To End This Game:
          - And Explain To This Beloved Church - His True Character In His Life & Service For Them!
  - So - From 12:11-15 - He Writes:
    - “I am become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me: for I ought to have been commended of you: for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing. / Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds. / For what is it wherein ye were inferior to other churches, except it be that I myself was not burdensome to you? forgive me this wrong. / Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will not be burdensome to you: for I seek not yours, but you: for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children. / And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved!”
4. As We Just Read - The Apostle Paul:
  - Sought To Serve Christ:
    - And This Church:
      - In A Rather Unconventional, Unnatural & Even Abnormal Way:
        - According To The Standards Of This World!
    - But What Is Abnormal To The World:
      - Really Is & Ought To Be Normal:
        - For A Believer In Christ!
    - And What Is Unnatural To The World:
      - Really Is & Ought To Be Natural:
        - For A Servant Of Christ!
  - Isn't This What Jesus Himself Taught:
    - Back In Matthew 20:27-28:
      - “And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: / Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many!”
5. So - This Morning:
  - We Need To Learn:
    - What Paul Learned:
      - About Living & Serving As A Christian!

\* First - We Need To Learn To:

1. ***Look More Like Christ!***

- Even As Paul Strove To Do:
    - Through **Humble** Service!
      - This Is What We Find In 12:11:
        - “I am become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me: for I ought to have been commended of you: for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing!”
  - Now - In The Eyes Of The World:
    - “Glorying” - Which Here Can Also Mean:
      - “Boasting” Or “Bragging” About Yourself:
        - And Your Accomplishments:
          - Is Perfectly Normal & Natural!
            - In Many Ways - It Seems Like The Only Way To Get Noticed & To Get Ahead!
    - **IE:** Told - Write A Resume - “Sell Yourself!”
  - But What Is Normal In This World:
    - Is & Ought To Be Abnormal:
      - For The Christian & In The Church!
        - Which Is Why Paul Says - After Attempting To “Play The Same Game” As The False Teachers:
          - “I Am Become **A Fool** In Glorying!”
  - It Seems Like Paul Was Starting To Feel Ashamed That He Even Had To Write To Them The Way He Did!
    - But He Wrote This Way To Get Their Attention - Because It Was So Out-Of-Character For Him!
      - And In A Way - They Had “Compelled” Him To Do So!
    - But Now He Was Done!
      - Instead - He Was Going To Keep Living & Serving As Jesus Did!
        - Not In Pride, But In Great Humility!
  - We Too Need To Learn Humility:
    - For The Same Reasons Paul Did! First:
- Because Of The Favor Of God!
  - Paul Continues And Says:
    - “For In Nothing Am I Behind The Very Chiefest Apostles!”
      - Now - At First - It Sounds Like Paul Is Still Playing The Boasting Game!
        - But - In Truth - He’s Not!
- Paul Saw His Calling & Service:
  - As An Apostle As:
    - A Gracious Gift From The Lord!
      - All That He Had / All That He Did / All That He Was - Was From & Through The Lord!
    - Back In 1 Corinthians 15:10 - Paul Wrote:
      - “But by the grace of God I am what I am!”
  - And So - In The Same Breath - Paul Expresses A Humble Heart:
- Because Of The Folly Of Pride!
  - “Though I Be Nothing!”
    - This Is A Statement Of Humility!
      - Paul Knew That Without The Lord, He Was Nothing & Could Do Nothing Of True & Lasting Value!
  - Even As Jesus Taught:
    - In John 15:5 - “I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing!”
- Now - This Kind Of Humble Attitude:
  - And Humble Service:
    - Is Unnatural To The World!
      - But Will Become Completely Natural:
        - For You - As You Learn From The Humble Heart & Service:
          - Of Your Savior!
- Remember These Words From Philippians 2!

- 2:3-8 - "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. / Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. / Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: / Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: / But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: / And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross!"

- Let Us Learn To **Look** More & More Like Jesus Himself!

- Because The Christian Life:

- Is A **Humble** Life!

- And Christian Service:

- Is **Humble** Service!

- **Learn To Look Like Jesus!**

\* Second - We Need To Learn To:

2. **Live More Like Christ!**

- Even As Paul Strove To Do:

- Through **Patient** Service!

- This Is What We Find In 12:12:

- "Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds!"

- Now - The Most Normal & Natural Way To Live:

- In This World - Is To "Live For The Moment!"

- The Goal Of So Many People Is To Just "Take Thine Ease, Eat, Drink, And Be Merry!" (Luke 12:19)

- **IE:** If You Stayed Up For The New Year, And You Watched Any Of The Events On TV, This Was On Full Display!

- But What Is Normal In This World:

- Is & Ought To Be Abnormal:

- For The Christian & In The Church!

- Which Is Why Paul Describes The Kind Of Life & Service He Had With Them!

- "Truly The Signs Of An Apostle Were Wrought Among You" - Paul Says!

- And This Was One Reason Why They Should Have Responded To Him & His Ministry!

- Now - There Are Other "Signs Of An Apostle" That Are Mentioned In The New Testament:

- But The "Signs" Mentioned Here Are Really:

- Different Sides Of The Same Sign:

- The Sign Of Miracles!

- God Gifted Paul To Work:

- "Signs & Wonders & Mighty Deeds!"

- Miracles Used For Attention:

- Were Called "Signs!"

- God Gave This Gift To Paul:

- To Help Him Be Identified As:

- A True Apostle!

- Miracles Used For Awe:

- Were Called "Wonders!"

- These Were Used Much Like The Plagues:

- God Used In Egypt - To Bring People To A Point Of Astonishment & Even Concern:

- About Their Condition Before Such A Mighty & Powerful God!

- Miracles Used For Approval:

- Were Called "Mighty Deeds!"

- Which Were Used To Show That:

- God Had Granted His Approval & Authority To These Men!

- Now - You Would Think:

- That With These Kinds Of Gifts:

- In Your Arsenal - How Easy It Would Be:

- To Serve God! No Matter Where He Sent You & No Matter Who You Spoke To!

- But This Does Not Appear To Be The Case!

- Because Paul Says That When He Was With Them:

- Even Performing These Kinds Of "Miracles" Before Them:

- He Had To Do So **“In All Patience!”**
  - So It Seems That The Corinthians Were Not Easily Persuaded!
  - Not Unlike The Pharaoh In Egypt - Whose Heart Was Hard!
- Remember The Beginning:
  - Of The Corinthian Church - From Acts 18?
    - The Lord Had To Console & Encourage Paul!
      - 18:9-10 - “Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace / For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city!”
  - In Spite Of Paul’s God-Given Gift To Work:
    - “Signs & Wonders & Mighty Deeds” - He Still:
      - Experienced Fear In His Service For The Lord!
      - And So - He Needed To Learn To Serve As Christ Served!
        - With Patience & Persistence!
- But This Kind Of Patient Attitude:
  - And Patient Service:
    - Is So Unnatural To The World!
      - But It Can Become Completely Natural:
        - For You - As You Too Learn From The Patient Heart & Service:
          - Of The Lord!
    - Think About How Jesus Came To Serve!
      - Hebrews 12:2-3 - “Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him **endured** the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. / For consider him that **endured** such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds!”
        - Even Jesus - With The Purity Of His Life & The Power Of His Words - Still Had To **Endure** “Such Contradiction Of Sinners Against Himself!”
          - Yet - **He Persevered** - In Order To Fulfill His Ministry - And To Die On The Cross - So That You & I Might Be Saved By Faith In Him!
    - So - Let Us Learn To **Live** More & More Like Jesus!
      - Because The Christian Life:
        - Is To Be A **Patient** Life!
      - And Christian Service:
        - Is A Matter Of **Endurance!**
      - **Learn To Live Like Jesus!**

\* Third - We Need To Learn To:

3. **Labor More Like Christ!**

- Even As Paul Strove To Do:
  - Through **Self-Less** Service!
    - This Is What We Find In 12:13-14:
      - “For what is it wherein ye were inferior to other churches, except it be that I myself was not burdensome to you? forgive me this wrong. / Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will not be burdensome to you: for I seek not yours, but you: for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children!”
  - Again - It Is Quite Normal & Natural:
    - For Us To Live Our Lives For Ourselves:
      - In A Selfish & Self-Absorbed Way!
        - **IE:** The World Will Tell You That You “Need To Look Out For Number One!” Referring, Of Course, To Yourself!
    - And It Seems Like:
      - The Corinthian Church Was Infected With This Kind Of Attitude As Well!
        - Even To They Point Where They Were Jealous Of Other Churches:
          - And Thinking That - Because They Had Paul As Their Apostle - They Were “Inferior” To The Other Churches!
    - So Paul Takes The Opportunity Here:
      - To Remind Them That The Only Difference Between Them Them & The Other Churches:
        - Was That They Did Not Have To Support Paul Financially!

- Because He Did Not Want To Place That Kind Of Burden On Them!
- In Everything Else - They Were The Same!
  - Every Church - Including Theirs / Ours:
    - Had The Same Founder - Christ!
    - Had The Same Gifts - From The Holy Spirit!
    - And Had The Same Mission - The Gospel!
  - No Reason For Jealousy!
    - No Reason For “Comparison Shopping!”
- And So - He Shows Them - And Us:
  - The Kind Of Attitude We Should Have:
    - Toward Each Other! Self-Less-Ness!
- A Self-Less Desire:
  - For Each Other - Even As Paul Had!
    - 12:14 - “For I Seek Not Yours, But You!”
    - The Reason Why Paul Did Not Actively Seek Financial Support From Them Or Any Other Church:
      - Was So That There Would No Question About His Motive For Ministry!
  - His Desire Was Not:
    - For Himself - But For Them!
      - Not - What Can I Get From You:
        - But How Can I Give Myself To You:
          - So That You Might Belong To Christ!
      - Also:
- A Self-Less Devotion:
  - For Each Other - Even As Paul Had!
    - 12:14 - “For The Children Ought Not To Lay Up For The Parents, But The Parents For The Children!”
      - **IE:** It Is A Normal Thing For Parents To Want To Provide For Their Children! As Someone Once Said - “Parental Love Is An Expensive Love!” - According To A Report By The Department Of Agriculture - The Cost Of Rearing A Child Through The Age Of 17 In The US Is About \$230,000! But That’s OK! Because Parents Do This Out Of Love!
  - And So - As Parents Provide For Their Children:
    - Paul Also Sought To Provide For The Corinthians:
      - As A Spiritual Father To Them!
- But This Kind Of Self-Less Attitude:
  - And Self-Less Service:
    - Is Quite Unnatural To The World!
      - But It Will Become Completely Natural:
        - **For You** - As You Too Learn From The Self-Less Heart & Service:
          - Of The Lord!
    - Remember The Lesson Jesus Gave To His Disciples:
      - In Mark 10:42-45 - “But Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. / But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: / And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. / For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many!”
        - Jesus Did Not Come To Be Served:
          - But To Serve!
          - He Was Completely **Self-Less!**
      - So - Let Us Learn To **Labor** More & More Like Jesus!
        - Because The Christian Life:
          - Is To Be A **Self-Less** Life!
        - And Christian Service:
          - Is A **Self-Less** Service!
          - **Learn To Labor Like Jesus!**

\* And Then - Fourth - We Need To Learn To:

4. Love More Like Christ!

- Even As Paul Strove To Do:
  - Through **Sacrificial** Service!
    - Which Is What We Find In 12:15:
      - “And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved!”
      - Here - The True Motivation Of Paul’s Service For The Lord & For The Church Comes Out - **Love!**
- But - From The World’s Perspective:
  - Sacrificial Love Is Not A Natural Thing & Not A Normal Thing!
    - **IE:** This Is Why Stories Of Sacrificial Love Are Celebrated & Often Made Into Books & Movies - Because It Is So Rare & Exceptional!
  - But What Is **Not** Natural:
    - Will **Become** Natural:
      - In Your Life As A Christian!
  - And What Is **Not** Normal:
    - Will **Become** Normal:
      - In Your Service As A Christian!
      - And There Will Be:
- The True Attitude Of Christ-Like Love!
  - Paul Writes - “I Will Very Gladly Spend & Be Spent For You!”
    - This Is A Contrast With His Desire From Them:
      - In 12:14 - “I Seek Not Yours, But You!”
    - **Paul Did Not Want Anything From Them:**
      - **But Was Willing To Give Everything:**
        - **For Them!**
          - And “Spend” All He Had!
            - All His Money / All His Resources / All His Energy / All His Time!
      - In Fact - Whatever Paul Made:
        - He Gave - And He Did So:
          - “Very Gladly!”
            - It Was One Of His Greatest Pleasures!
        - For Paul - It Really Was:
          - “Better To Give Than To Receive!”
            - Especially If It Meant The Winning Of Their Souls For Christ!
    - But This Sacrificial Love:
      - Extended Not Just To His Possessions:
        - But To His Own Person!
          - He Was Willing Also To “**Be Spent**” For Them!
      - He Was Willing To Be Completely:
        - **Used Up** In His Service For The Lord:
          - And For Them - For “**Their Souls!**”
    - And So:
      - His Time Was Not His Own!
      - His Gifts Were Not His Own!
      - Even His Health Was Not His Own!
      - He Gladly Allowed Himself To Be **Used Up:**
        - In His Service For Christ!
        - But We Also See:
  - The True Affection Of Christ-Like Love!
    - In 12:15 He Adds - “Though The More Abundantly I Love You, The Less I Be Loved!”
      - Some Other Translations Have This In The Form Of A Question:
        - Either Way - This Seems To Be An Ongoing Condition In That Church!
          - The Love Of The Corinthians For The Apostle Paul Had Grown Weak & Cold!
    - But In Spite Of This:
      - Paul’s Love For Them:
        - Continued To Grow & To Flourish!
    - As Philip Hughes Once Wrote:
      - “Less Love On Their Part Will Not Diminish The Greatness Of His Love For Them; For It Is Not

To Himself That He Wishes To Bind Them But To Christ!”

- And So - His Love Was A Reflection Of Christ’s Love:

- Which Is A “Love That Does Not Count The Cost, That Gives All And Seeks No Reward!”

- This Kind Of Loving Attitude:

- And Loving Service:

- Is So Unnatural For Us - In Our Own Flesh!

- But It Can Become Completely Natural:

- As You Learn From The Sacrificial Love Of Jesus Christ Himself!

- In Galatians 2:20, Paul Writes:

- “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me!”

- Jesus Loved You!

- And Gave Himself For You!

- He Gave His Very Life So That You Might Receive Life & Rest For Your Soul!

- Jesus Said In John 15:13:

- “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends!”

- This Is True Love!

- This Is Sacrificial Love!

- This Is Wondrous Love!

- What wondrous love is this, O my soul, O my soul!

- What wondrous love is this, O my soul!

- What wondrous love is this, that caused the Lord of bliss:

- To bear the dreadful curse for my soul, for my soul,

- To bear the dreadful curse for my soul!

## Conclusion:

1. And Now - Let Us Learn To **Love** More & More Like Jesus!

- Because The Christian Life:

- Is An Unnatural & Even An Abnormal Life:

- To The Eyes Of This World!

- But It Will Become **Normal**:

- As You Seek:

- To **Look** Like Christ:

- With His Humility!

- To **Live** Like Christ:

- With His Patience & Endurance!

- To **Labor** Like Christ:

- With His Self-Less-Ness!

- And To **Love** Like Christ:

- With Complete Surrender & Sacrifice:

- To Him & To His People!

2. You Will Never Regret It:

- When You Live & Serve:

- As Paul Did - And Even More - As Jesus Did!

- May Your Life’s Motto Become:

- **“I Will Very Gladly Spend And Be Spent – For Christ!”**

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