

2 Corinthians 12:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will not be burdensome to you: for I seek not your's, but you: for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children.

Analysis

Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will not be burdensome to you: for I seek not your's, but you: for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children. Paul announces his **third** planned visit (previous: founding visit Acts 18:1-11; "painful visit" 2:1). He maintains his policy: **I will not be burdensome**—refusing financial support. But now he explains the pastoral motivation: **I seek not your's, but you** (ou gar zētō ta hymōn alla hymas, οὐ γὰρ ζητῶ τὰ ὑμῶν ἀλλὰ ὑμᾶς)—not your possessions but yourselves.

The analogy is tender: **children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children.** Paul positions himself as spiritual father (1 Corinthians 4:15, "I have begotten you through the gospel") who sacrifices for his children's welfare, not extracting resources from them. This inverts mercenary ministry: true pastors give sacrificially; false teachers take exploitatively (cf. 2:17, "which corrupt the word of God"; 11:20, "if a man devour you").

The phrase captures gospel logic: God doesn't need our resources but desires relationship (Psalm 50:12-14). Likewise, pastoral ministry flowing from gospel priorities seeks people's hearts, not their wallets. Paul's financial independence demonstrated this gospel shape.

Historical Context

In Greco-Roman patronage culture, teachers, philosophers, and religious leaders expected payment—often exploiting followers financially. Paul's refusal to accept Corinthian support (while accepting Macedonian support, 11:8-9) was strategic: it prevented accusations of greed and demonstrated that gospel ministry seeks converts' welfare, not wealth. The false apostles' financial exploitation (11:20) made Paul's self-support even more crucial.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. How does "I seek not yours, but you" define the heart of pastoral ministry versus mercenary religious professionalism?
2. What does the parent-child analogy teach about the proper direction of sacrifice in ministry—leaders serving people versus people serving leaders' comfort?
3. How can contemporary church leaders balance biblical teaching on financial support for ministry (1 Timothy 5:17-18) with Paul's example of refusing support for gospel clarity?

Interlinear Text

Ἴδού, τρίτον ἐτοίμως ἔχω ἐλθεῖν πρὸς ὑμᾶς καὶ οὐ
Behold the third time ready I am to come to you and not
G2400 G5154 G2093 G2192 G2064 G4314 G5209 G2532 G3756

καταναρκήσω· ὑμῶν· οὐ γὰρ ζητῶ τὰ ὑμῶν· ἀλλ'
I will to you not for I seek G3588 to you but
G2655 G5216 G3756 G1063 G2212 G5216 G235

ὑμᾶς οὐ γὰρ ὀφείλει τὰ τέκνοις τοῖς γονεῖς
you not for ought G3588 for the children G3588 for the parents
G5209 G3756 G1063 G3784 G5043 G1118

θησαυρίζειν ἀλλ' οἱ γονεῖς τοῖς τέκνοις
to lay up but G3588 for the parents G3588 for the children
G2343 G235 G1118 G5043

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 19:14 (Parallel theme): House and riches are the inheritance of fathers: and a prudent wife is from the LORD.

1 Corinthians 10:33 (Parallel theme): Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.

1 Corinthians 10:24 (Parallel theme): Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth.

Proverbs 13:22 (Parallel theme): A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children's children: and the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just.

2 Corinthians 1:15 (Parallel theme): And in this confidence I was minded to come unto you before, that ye might have a second benefit;

Ezekiel 34:2 (Parallel theme): Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD unto the shepherds; Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks?

Acts 20:33 (Parallel theme): I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel.

1 Thessalonians 2:11 (Parallel theme): As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children,

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