

2 Corinthians 12:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved.

Analysis

And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved. Paul intensifies: beyond refusing Corinthian money, he'll **spend** (dapanēsō, δαπανήσω, "expend resources") and **be spent** (ekdapanēthēsomaī, ἐκδαπανηθήσομαι, "be utterly exhausted," "be poured out")—active giving plus passive self-sacrifice. The double verb shows total expenditure: Paul's resources and Paul himself.

The contrast is heartbreak: **though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved** (ei perissoteros hymas agapōn, hētton agapōmai, εἰ περισσοτέρως ὑμᾶς ἀγαπῶν, ἦττον ἀγαπῶμαι). Paul uses agapaō (ἀγαπάω, self-sacrificial love) not phileō (affectionate friendship)—gospel love, not mere sentiment. His greater love produces less reciprocal affection, inverting normal relational dynamics.

This verse captures pastoral ministry's cost: loving difficult people who respond with suspicion or indifference. Yet Paul continues spending himself, modeling Christ who loved us "while we were yet sinners" (Romans 5:8). Ministry effectiveness isn't measured by congregation's affection but by faithfulness to Christlike love.

Historical Context

Paul's hurt reflects the emotional reality of ministry among fickle congregations. The Corinthians had turned against him under false teachers' influence (11:3-4,

13-15), yet he continues loving them sacrificially. This demonstrates gospel ministry: loving even when love isn't returned, giving even when gifts are despised, persevering even when congregations prove ungrateful.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does "spend and be spent" define total pastoral investment versus maintaining professional boundaries that protect ministers from emotional/spiritual exhaustion?
2. What does Paul's continuing love despite diminishing reciprocal affection teach about Christlike ministry—loving because of Christ's love, not others' response?
3. How should pastoral leaders balance the reality that "more love produces less love" with avoiding bitterness or withdrawal from difficult congregations?

Interlinear Text

ἐγὼ δὲ ἥδιστα δαπανήσω καὶ ἐκδαπανηθήσομαι

I And will very gladly spend be spent

G1473 G1161 G2236 G1159 G2532 G1550

ὑπὲρ τῶν ψυχῶν ὑμῶν εἰ καὶ περισσοτέρως ὑμᾶς

for you the more abundantly you

G5228 G3588 G5590 G5216 G1487 G2532 G4056 G5209

ἀγαπῶμαι ἥττον ἀγαπῶμαι

I be loved the less I be loved

G25 G2276 G25

Additional Cross-References

1 Thessalonians 2:8 (Parallel theme): So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.

2 Corinthians 1:6 (Parallel theme): And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation.

Philippians 2:17 (Parallel theme): Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all.

Colossians 1:24 (Parallel theme): Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church:

2 Corinthians 2:3 (Parallel theme): And I wrote this same unto you, lest, when I came, I should have sorrow from them of whom I ought to rejoice; having confidence in you all, that my joy is the joy of you all.

2 Timothy 2:10 (Parallel theme): Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

Hebrews 13:17 (Parallel theme): Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.

2 Corinthians 7:3 (Parallel theme): I speak not this to condemn you: for I have said before, that ye are in our hearts to die and live with you.

2 Corinthians 12:14 (Parallel theme): 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.

2 Corinthians 12:9 (Parallel theme): And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

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