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# Through Paul's Eyes

In Apostle Paul's Fourth Journey where he was arrested and brought in a trial before Festus who Consults King Agrippa who seems familiar with the customs and controversies of the Jews and shared his witness of the gospel. This was how King Agrippa responded:

### **Acts 26:28-29 (NLT)**

*"Agrippa interrupted him. "Do you think you can persuade me to become a Christian so quickly?" Paul replied, "Whether quickly or not, I pray to God that both you and everyone here in this audience might become the same as I am, except for these chains."*

#### **NEXT WEEK'S SERMON**

17 November 2024

**Pierced for our  
Transgressions**

Isaiah 52:13-53:12

Preacher  
**Dr. Peter Ng**

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**This part of the story struck me because I felt Apostle Paul's heart for the audience to believe in the Resurrected Christ, he wishes them to believe, but he does not seem to wish for them to be in chains like him. I pondered over this. I pondered over what it means when Paul says "become the same as I am."**



Same as Paul? Is it seeing what Paul sees? Feeling what Paul feels? I want to see Christ as Paul sees Christ, that he would go through beatings, shipwrecks, robbers, starvation, insomnia, and persecution from his own race and others as well as the threat of believers claiming to be believers but are not... and still power through these hardships. Yet despite so many personal hardships on his plate, he is thinking of all the churches daily. He was concerned for the weak ones, he was concerned that some would be led astray. Here is a list of Paul's hardships:

### **2 Corinthians 11:25-29**

*Five different times the Jewish leaders gave me thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked. Once I spent a whole night and a day adrift at sea. I have traveled on many long journeys. I have faced danger from rivers and from robbers. I have faced danger from my people, the Jews, as well as from the Gentiles. I have faced danger in the cities, in the deserts, and on the seas. And*

*I have faced danger from men who claim to be believers but are not. I have worked hard and long, enduring many sleepless nights. I have been hungry and thirsty and have often gone without food. I have shivered in the cold, without enough clothing to keep me warm. Then, besides all this, I have the daily burden of my concern for all the churches. Who is weak without my feeling that weakness? Who is led astray, and I do not burn with anger?*





There was a time when I am too afraid to pray that I will be like Paul, so dedicated to Christ that he seemed to neglect his own needs and wants. Does he not have a right to not get beaten up? Does he not have a right to have a smooth outreach, where everything goes well when he shares the gospel? Does he not have a right to have enough sleep? Enough food? Not feeling physical thirst?

Yet, I am not proposing that all Christians become masochist, to wish for these types of sufferings, to promote them unnecessarily. That is because there is a part of Paul in Acts 26:28-29 that wishes for the people to believe in the Gospel and love the Lord, but not to be in chains like he was. I can see Paul as a parent who goes through hardship to raise his children (the church), he is willing to suffer for his kids, and he doesn't wish for his kids to suffer, he just wants them to grow up into *maturity and love God and each other*. We can see his wish for them to grow in *Philippians 1:9-10*.

### **Philippians 1:9-10 (NLT)**

*I pray that your love will overflow more and more, and that you will keep on growing in knowledge and understanding. For I want you to understand what really matters, so that you may live pure and blameless lives until the day of Christ's return.*

I can see his heart as a parent when he is scolding his Corinthian "kids" in 2 Corinthians 12 when the Corinthian church thinks Paul is in it for the money gains. He says he wants THEM not their money.

### **2 Corinthians 12:13-15**

*The only thing I failed to do, which I do in the other churches, was to become a financial burden to you. Please forgive me for this wrong! Paul was really sarcastic ; Now I am coming to you for the third time, and I will not be a burden to you. I don't want what you have—I **want you**. After all, children don't provide for their parents. Rather, parents provide for their children. I will gladly spend myself and all I have for you, even though it seems that the more I love you, the less you love me.*



We can see that Paul cares about his “kids” by his saying: “I don’t want what you have (ie:Money) —I want you <ie:the believing kids>.” Paul would gladly spend all of himself, his money, his time, his emotions for his kids, providing them with the resources they need to love Christ and each other, Yet he is lamenting that it seems the more he loves them the less they seem to responding in love.

## **2 Corinthians 12:19-21**

*Perhaps you think we’re saying these things just to defend ourselves. No, we tell you this as Christ’s servants, and with God as our witness. Everything we do, dear friends, is to strengthen you. For I am afraid that when I come I won’t like what I find, and you won’t like my response. I am afraid that I will find quarreling, jealousy, anger, selfishness, slander, gossip, arrogance, and disorderly behavior. Yes, I am afraid that when I come again, God will humble me in your presence. And I will be grieved because many of you have not given up your old sins. You have not repented of your impurity, sexual immorality, and eagerness for lustful pleasure.*

Paul says in 2 Corinthians 12:19-21 that his goal is to strengthen his Corinthian children. He was going to visit them because of all the reports of the trouble that was going on there. It seems he is dreading the thought of finding his children quarrelling and in a disordered disobedience. He is afraid of being “humbled” in their presence and will grieve because his kids are still sinning persistently. I interpret this a parent who feels his

failures in teaching and discipline his kids, hence reminding him of his humanly weakness, humbling him in front of God.

I don’t know if apostle Paul is looking down from heaven like a parent as we are his great-great-great x 100 grand children-in-Christ, and wishing the same for us. But from apostle Paul, I can also predict God’s heart as a Father figure that cares about our growth to maturity in Christ and getting along with each other. Parents want their kids to get along with each other, right?

Even though I am not a parent, I think I can sometimes feel what Paul feels after teaching, guiding, discipling some people (informally) in the church. I would like to see them grow and mature and I pray for it occasionally (not daily like Paul yet, perhaps one day!)

I will end my article with a prayer/advice inspired by the apostle Paul in 2 Cor 13:11: Dear brothers and sisters in First Baptist Church, I close my article with these last words: Be joyful. Grow to maturity. Encourage each other. Live in harmony and peace. Then the God of love and peace will be with you. May you all learn how to love God and each other more and more each day. Don’t fight ah. Amen.



### **By Toh Kai Xian**

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# Prayer for Young Adults

1. Almighty Lord for the young adults in FBC. We thank you for keeping them faithful and strong in you. We marvel that many of our young adults are faithfully rising to serve you, your people and the community at large.
2. We pray that the young adults will always seek you, Lord, in all their choices. Teach them Lord, to place their confidence in you to make most of every opportunity to glorify your name.
3. We ask that they will love with the Word of God, putting their trust in Scripture as the source of authority.
4. We pray for the young adults in their job situations that they will excel and will seek ways to use their gifts in a way that can point others to Jesus.
5. Father we pray you would bring the young adults to develop soul satisfying relationships with other believers and honest relationships with nonbelievers. Pray that they can be an influence in their non-believing friends' lives.

