

## 2 CORINTHIANS 10 The Spiritual War; Reality of Paul's Authority; Limits of Paul's Authority

### OBSERVATION

Monday 7:00pm, H 105 (1st floor, High School--foot of stairs, behind the gym, by the vending machine area), Tuesday 7:00am, Family, Room, CCCM – Phil Twente, cell #714 425 9221; email – [ptwente@gmail.com](mailto:ptwente@gmail.com) For past studies, audio plus notes, go to: [www.ptwente.com](http://www.ptwente.com) Click on “Latest Studies” on the right side. References include commentaries by numerous pastor/teachers.

### INTERPRETATION

### APPLICATION

### 2 CORINTHIANS 10 Paul Defends His Ministry;

The Spirit led Paul to use a wise approach as he wrote to the Corinthians. He was writing to a divided church (*1Co\_1:11*), a church that was resisting his authority, and a church that was being seduced by false teachers. So, first he explained his ministry so that they would no longer doubt his sincerity. He then encouraged them to share in the offering, for he knew that this challenge would help them grow in their spiritual lives. Grace giving and grace living go together. Paul introduces this chapter with a change of tone. Some have even thought that 2 Corinthians 10 through 13 are really a different letter altogether that was added to the end of 2 Corinthians 1 through 9. This isn't likely, but it does show that Paul is changing his area of emphasis as he ends the letter.

### The Spiritual War;

*2Co 10:1 Now I, Paul, myself am pleading with you by the meekness (Mt.11:29 & crucifixion) and gentleness of Christ—who in presence (physical presence – chap 10:v.10) am lowly among you, but being absent am bold toward you.*

*2Co 10:2 But I beg you (2 Cor. 11:2 godly jealousy; 10:15 indescribable gift) that when I am present I may not be bold with that confidence by which I intend to be bold (Acts 13:8-12 Elymas) against some (chap. 11v12-15), who think of us as if we walked according to the flesh.*

*2Co 10:3 For though we walk in the flesh (world), we do not war according to the flesh.*

*2Co 10:4 For the weapons of our warfare (2,000 yr. + campaign against principalities and powers) are not carnal but mighty (incomparable in power!) in God for pulling down (only used in 2 Cor. 10:4,8; 13:10 - to demolish, annihilate) strongholds (not tents or huts, but strengthened fortresses, which for us are reasoning – TV, media, music, legislature, evolution, moral arguments, drugs, alcoholism)*

*v. 1* In these last four chapters, Paul will use strong language with the special group related to false teachers, in the Corinthian church. However, note he pleads *by the meekness and gentleness of Christ. ... in presence am lowly among you, but being absent am bold toward you*: Paul reveals a matter of great contention between him and the Corinthian Christians. They criticized Paul that he was reserved in person, but very bold in his letters, like a dog that barked loudly, but only at a distance, accusing him of backing down in any face to face confrontation. Being *in presence lowly and bold toward you* other times, seems contradictory? But we can see that in the life of Jesus.

*John 2:13-17; Mt. 21:12-13; Mt. 11:28-29; 23:13-17.*

*v. 2* Paul desires that the Corinthians will change their attitude towards him and his apostleship, that he may come to them in gentleness, not severity. ... *against some*: Not all of the Corinthians had a bad opinion. It probably was a vocal minority. *Who think of us as if walked according to the flesh*: Another aspect of the accusations was that Paul *walked according to the flesh* or world, because of the perceived contradiction between his gentleness and his severity.

*v. 3* Does Paul minister according to the flesh? He will admit that he walks according to the flesh in the sense that we all do. He is a flesh and blood human being, struggling with the same things all Christians struggled with. But he makes it clear that he does *not war according to the flesh*.

*v. 4 are not carnal*: Paul's weapons were not carnal, the manipulative and deceitful ways his opponents used, but spiritual, suited for spiritual war. In *Eph. 6*, Paul lists the kind of spiritual weapons he did use: the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shoes of the gospel, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit. To rely on these weapons took faith in God instead of carnal methods, which the Corinthians tended to rely on. But truly, these spiritual weapons are mighty in God for pulling down strongholds! Jesus relied on spiritual weapons when He fought for our salvation. *Php 2:6-8, pulling down strongholds*, Praise God, strongholds can be pulled down! In the gospel there are weapons which no human reasonings or workings can withstand; but we too often trust carnal methods, and do not avail ourselves of this invincible array!

*1–* Can you see that you can be Christ like and still be lowly in presence and bold in absence, as Paul was? We can see both humility and strength in ministry. Here in a very personal approach, **Paul is fighting this battle (truth, philosophy, pride) which is coming against the Corinthian church from the false teacher within the church (Eph. 20:29, defending his ministry, in order to protect not only his ministry, but consequently defending the gospel and the entire Word of God.**

*2–* Paul will defend his apostolic authority. It is important to note how vital Paul's sense of apostolic authority was to him, which today is cheapened today by many of those who claim to be “apostles.” What do we think of apostolic authority?

*3– Eph. 6* tells us that Satan fires fiery darts—a bit of hell—into our minds. H can't possess our hearts, but there's still a battle going on for the mind. The spirit is secure, but the soul—the mind, emotions, and will—is still up for grabs. In *Eph.6*, Paul tells us more about the warfare we wage involving ourselves. **For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.—Eph\_6:12** The major weapons are His word and prayer. **Is the world defiling, infecting you or are you being a light for Jesus in the world infecting it?**

*4–* Jesus told His disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the power of the Holy Spirit to be given to them! Our weapons are not carnal but incomparably powerful, because they are **IN GOD** – vertical weapons, not the horizontal weapons of the world! **Are we employing His mighty weapons against this warfare from the world?**

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### INTERPRETATION

### APPLICATION

**2Co 10:5 casting down arguments** (imagination, reasonings) **and every high thing that exalts itself** (my imaginations which are against His Word, making myself higher than God!) **against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ**, (Lord, I shouldn't be thinking these things, I bring and give it to You!)

**2Co 10:6 and being ready to punish** (deal with, deal vengeance upon, Romans would set up garrisons to prevent uprisings) **all disobedience** (unwillingness to obey) **when your obedience** (willingness to obey) **is fulfilled**.

**v. 5 Arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God:** Carnal, worldly ways of thinking and doing are **arguments** against the mind and methods of God. They want to debate God, claiming to be a better way. They exalt themselves **against the knowledge of God**. They think of themselves as smarter, more sophisticated, more effective, more powerful than God's ways. Carnal, worldly minds think they know more than God does! Paul is speaking to carnal, worldly thinking *among Christians*. He isn't talking about the world here., The Corinthians Christians were the ones with the **strongholds** in their minds and hearts. They made the **arguments** against God's mind and methods. They held on to **every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God**. We miss it entirely if we think the love of manipulation the image of success, smooth words, the perception of power, lording over authority, and human schemes and programs are just problems with the world. Paul was dealing with this heart and mind in the church. **Bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ:** To battle against this carnal way of thinking and doing, our thoughts must be brought captive and made obedient to Jesus. When we start to think in this carnal way, we must stop our thoughts, take dominion over them in Jesus, and *not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind (Rom 12:2)*. We are not helpless victims or recipients of our thoughts. We can choose to stop our thoughts, and bring **every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ**

**v. 6. And being ready to punish all disobedience:** Paul was ready to confront the Corinthian Christians, and to pull down the strongholds among them if they would not do it themselves. **When your obedience is fulfilled:** Paul sees no point in coming to confront disobedience until those who have obeyed Jesus have made up their mind to do so. He will give time for those who want to renounce carnal weapons to do so. Then he will come to punish the disobedience of those who will not renounce those carnal weapons.

**v. 5–** When the thought comes as we hear what negative or criticizing thing someone is reported to have said, and unkindness has come over to us, our carnality would say, ‘Counterattack!’ Spirituality recognizes that nothing that any person could ever say about any one of is really one hundredth part as bad as the truth if he only knew it. Therefore, we have no reason to counterattack, but one good reason to submit and to forget. When **any** of my imaginations are against His Word, making myself higher than God, I must bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. Lord, I shouldn't be thinking these things, I bring and give it to You!

**v. 6** Are we ready, through this mighty armor of God, to confront and possibly even punish those who oppose the doctrine of Christ, and the disobedience which has been produced by them. Are we active in doing that?

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### INTERPRETATION

### APPLICATION

#### Reality of Paul's Authority;

*2Co 10:7 Do you look at things according to the outward appearance? If anyone is convinced in himself that he is Christ's, let him again consider this in himself, that just as he is Christ's, even so we are Christ's.*

*2Co 10:8 For even if I should boast somewhat more about our authority, which the Lord gave us for edification and not for your destruction, I shall not be ashamed—*

*2Co 10:9 lest I seem to terrify you by letters.*

*2Co 10:10 "For his letters," they say, "are weighty and powerful, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible."*

v. 7. The Corinthians, especially the troublemakers, had a carnal reliance on outward appearances. Paul was weak and unimpressive. A description of Paul from an early Christian writing said that he was a man of small stature, with a bald head and crooked legs, in a good state of body, with eyebrows meeting and nose somewhat hooked. But this described Paul only on an outward, surface level. His critics said that there were “two Pauls,” one reflected in his letters and one evident in person, but they really didn’t know Paul, except outwardly. ***So we are Christ's:*** If you claim to belong to Jesus, look at yourself. You may not be mighty in outward appearance, yet you belong to Jesus. We ***are Christ's*** as well.

v. 8. Paul's view of his authority as an apostle. ...***should boast somewhat more:*** Paul is uncomfortable writing about his own authority because he is a humble, godly man. He is using ***boast*** here in an exaggerated sense to show he would prefer not to talk about his own authority; it feels like “boasting” to him. Paul knows how much better it would be if the Corinthians would simply recognize his authority, so he wouldn't have to ***boast somewhat more*** about it. ...***the Lord gave us for edification and not for your destruction:*** Paul recognizes that Jesus grants authority in the church for one reason. That is to build the body of believers up (***edification***), not to tear it down (***destruction***). This is true of every level of authority God has granted. In the church, in the home, in the workplace, and in government, God has established levels of authority and submission. He did this to build up, not to destroy.

vs. 9-10. Paul's despisers among the Corinthian Christians felt they had “evidence” against him, which was that ***he seemed to be tough in his letters, but weak and unimpressive in person. So they used this as “evidence” to despise him as weak and two-faced,*** relying only on ***outward appearance.*** They would say of Paul, “***his speech [is] contemptible,***” hearing only the style and presentation of his sermons, not the message itself. ***Paul's humility and complete reliance on the power of God, not the power of his own personality, coupled with his strong letters, were being used against him.***

v. 7— None of us want to be judged only on our outward appearance. We often want people to see our heart. Yet the Corinthians would not grant to Paul what they wanted for themselves. Even though believers may not agree on everything, they should be considerate to one another because they are Christ's.

v. 8— Do we consider the level of authority and submission in the church, that God has established these levels to build up and not to destroy? I should also have no occasion to be ashamed of the manner in which my level of authority and submission in the church has been exercised.

vs. 9-10— Paul does not want his letters to be bold and terrifying and then he himself to be weak among them. This seems to indicate that Paul was not what one would call an attractive man. When people heard Paul, it was obvious to them that he was not preaching to them under his own physical strength or by his eloquence or by his personal magnetism. He probably was a weak-looking vessel. Perhaps, like Samson, it was obvious that his strength was not within himself but came from the Spirit of God.

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### INTERPRETATION

### APPLICATION

*2Co 10:11 Let such a person consider this, that what we are in word by letters when we are absent, such we will also be in deed when we are present.*

### Limits of Paul's Authority

*2Co 10:12 For we dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves. But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.*

*2Co 10:13 We, however, will not boast beyond measure, but within the limits of the sphere (lanes in a race) which God appointed us—a sphere which especially includes you.*

*2Co 10:14 For we are not overextending ourselves (as though our authority did not extend to you), for it was to you that we came with the gospel of Christ;*

**v. 11.** Let such a person consider this: Paul is writing to his despisers with perfect clarity. “If you want the ‘tough’ Paul, you will get him. I will come to you with all the authority I have shown in my letters.” If the Corinthians knew how serious Paul was, this should have frightened many of them! His criticizers probably wanted a consistently gentle Paul, one they felt they could freely despise and push around. But if they would not change, they would get a consistent Paul - but a consistently severe Paul!

**v. 12.** Wrong and right measures of ministry...*dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves*: The Corinthian critics were proud of themselves. Paul will not **class** or **compare** himself with these carnal, worldly people at all. *Measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves*: This explains why these Corinthian critics could think so highly of themselves. In their carnality, they simply measured *themselves by themselves*, and only compared *themselves among themselves*, resulting in making *yourself* the measure of others, as well as making *others* the measure of yourself. When we let the Holy Spirit measure us through God's Word, He measures us on God's scale, and He looks at the heart. ... *not wise*: This describes the Corinthian approach of *measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves*. It isn't wise. It isn't of God.

**vs. 13-14.** *Within the limits of the sphere which God appointed us: Paul's authority in the church was not unlimited. God had granted him a sphere* of authority, and that **sphere included the Corinthians**, especially since he had founded that church (*for it was to you that we came with the gospel of Christ*). The limits of the sphere may be compared to the lanes that were allotted for runners in a race. They would recognize this because they loved races and held the famous Isthmian Games in Corinth. Paul is saying, “I'm running in my own lane and not in someone else's.”

**v. 11 – such a person** – Maybe thinking primarily of one or a few persons who were undermining and making false claims about Pau, that they should find him, to their sorrow, the same man present as absent; that what he sent by letters, should be found to be fact, when he came again; whose coming would not be with all that tenderness and gentleness, as when he first preached the Gospel to them, for which there was then a reason; since they had swerved from the truths of the Gospel, and the right ways of God, which would require the severity he threatened them with, and the execution of would be certain.

**v. 12 –** We should not make ourselves the measure of others, feeling we are superior to them if, by outward appearance, we are more successful. Also, we should not make other our measure, feeling we are failures if, by outward appearance, they are more successful.

**vs. 13-14 –** Others All godly authority has a sphere. It is important for the person in authority to not exercise that authority outside the sphere, and it is important for the person under authority to recognize the sphere of authority they are under.



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*2Co 10:15 not boasting of things beyond measure, that is, in other men's labors, but having hope, that as your faith is increased, we shall be greatly enlarged by you in our sphere,*

*2Co 10:16 to preach the gospel in the regions beyond you, and not to boast in another man's sphere of accomplishment.*

*2Co 10:17 But "HE WHO GLORIES, LET HIM GLORY IN THE LORD."*

*2Co 10:18 For not he who commends himself is approved, but whom the Lord commends.*

v. 15. *As your faith is increased, we shall be greatly enlarged by you in our sphere:* As the Corinthians would grow in maturity and in outreach, their church would grow and plant many other churches. This would, by extension, enlarge Paul's *sphere* of authority. *In other men's labors . . . not to boast in another man's sphere of accomplishment:* Paul is probably stressing the point that he has not, and will not, take authority in another man's sphere because that is *exactly* what his opponents among the Corinthians were doing. They were trying to *boast* in Paul's *sphere of accomplishment*.

v. 16. Instead, Paul's passion was *to preach the gospel in the regions beyond*. He was not interested in building on another man's foundation, and trying to take over someone else's sphere of authority. It is base, abominable, and deeply sinful, for a man to push himself into other men's labors, and by sowing doubtful disputations among a Christian people, distract and divide them, than he may for himself . . . This evil that has prevailed in all ages of the Church. There presently is too much of it in the Christian world, and Christianity is disgraced by it.

v. 17 - Note here the importance of the Lord's commendation. *He who glories, let him glory in the LORD:* Jer 9:24, Paul is rebuking the Corinthians who were finding their glory either in Paul, or against Paul. Paul sweeps all that away, showing we should not glory in ourselves, in another, or against another - we should only *glory in the LORD*. The great thing about glorying in the LORD is that we can always do it. No one is so high that they cannot glory in the LORD. No one is so low that they cannot glory in the LORD. We can all glory in the LORD!

v. 18. *For not he who commends himself is approved, but whom the Lord commends:* It doesn't matter how you speak about your own accomplishments. It's what God says about us that matters and will endure. Paul wanted the respect of the Corinthians, but he wanted it for their sake, not his own. They were hurting their own spiritual growth and maturity in their rejection of him. As for himself, Paul was satisfied with the approval that came from the Lord. This is the place where every Christian, and especially every person in ministry, must be. It is a dangerous thing to commend one's self, or to approve one's self. Self-commendation should be viewed with suspicion as a mark of disqualification.

vs. 15 - 16 – Paul tells them they must remember that he came to them first. He was the first one to bring the gospel to them, and he had traveled a long way to do that. He says to them that his method is not to come and be a pastor of a church. He had been called to be a missionary. After he would begin a work and began to establish it, he would travel on. He was always moving out to the frontier. He never built on another man's foundation.

v. 17 – Jer 9:23-24 *Thus says the LORD: "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, Let not the mighty man glory in his might, Nor let the rich man glory in his riches; [24] But let him who glories glory in this, That he understands and knows Me, That I am the LORD, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight," says the LORD.* The Corinthians were glorying in wisdom, in might, and in riches, instead of glorying in the LORD. **In what are we glorying in?**

v. 18 – Paul was **satisfied with the approval that came from the Lord. This is the place** where every Christian, and especially every person in ministry, must be. It is a dangerous thing to commend one's self, or to approve one's self. **In what place are we?**

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		<p><b><u>ONWARD CHRISTIAN SOLDIERS – Sabine Baring-Gould/Arthur Sullivan – Joslin Grove</u></b></p> <p><i>1 Onward, Christian soldiers, marching as to war, With the cross of Jesus going on before! Christ, the royal Master, leads against the foe; Forward into battle, see his banner go!</i></p> <p><i>Refrain: Onward, Christian soldiers, marching as to war, With the cross of Jesus going on before!</i></p> <p><i>2 Like a mighty army moves the church of God; Brothers, we are treading where the saints have trod; We are not divided; all one body we, One in hope and doctrine, one in charity. [Refrain]</i></p> <p><i>3 Onward, then, ye people, join our happy throng, Blend with ours your voices in the triumph song; Glory, laud, and honor, unto Christ the King; This thro' countless ages men and angels sing. [Refrain]</i></p>
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