

2 Corinthians
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Chapter Ten

2Cor 10:1 Now I, Paul, myself urge you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ-- I who am meek when face to face with you, but bold toward you when absent!

Robert E. Lee said “It is well that war is so terrible – we should grow too fond of it!” Paul was perfectly willing to chastise them in his letters but when he was with them he did not want to be engaged in battle. He had said what needed to be said in his letters (we do not have all of them) and now when he went to them he wanted to show his forgiveness and love for their showing of their true faith by their repentance. His enemies elaborated on his actions by putting a negative spin on his actions. He wanted them to understand that all of his actions toward them are rooted in his love for them and the honor of Christ’s love for them.

2Cor 10:2 I ask that when I am present I may not be bold with the confidence with which I propose to be courageous against some, who regard us as if we walked according to the flesh.

Paul certainly demonstrated that he could be bold and confrontational when necessary as seen in Gal 2:11-14; Acts 23, 24, 25; Acts 15:2. He wanted his visit to them to be filled with love but he was perfectly willing to face those making false accusations against him.

2Cor 10:3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, 2Cor 10:4 for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.

2Cor 10:5 We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, 2Cor 10:6 and we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete.

Before going into a battle we have to understand our enemy. We also have to know exactly who our enemy is! In confrontations with people we have to ascertain if the engagement is of physical or spiritual origin. We should always take the appropriate weapons and defenses for the encounter. During WWII the Polish cavalry tried to take on German tanks with lances and swords but the panzers’ cannons and guns totally wiped them out. Paul was a physical being so he walked in the flesh. However he understood his enemy so he did not war according to the flesh. He also described in his battles in:

Eph 6:12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

He then told the Ephesians about the proper equipment for fighting such a battle:

Eph 6:13 Therefore, take up the full armor of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.

Eph 6:14 Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness,

Eph 6:15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

Eph 6:16 in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming missiles of the evil one.

Eph 6:17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

The fortresses he mentions here are ideologies. Our battles are against the false worldviews and other ideologies developed and propagated by the world that is under Satan. Sinners' strongholds are described as "every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God". These are the concepts Paul referred to in:

Col 2:8 See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.

Our battles are not directly against demons but against the people who are under Satan's control and who have developed their philosophies and deceptions. We are at war against those concepts everyday. We need to take every thought captive to judgment according to the Word of God so that we can do battle against the false concepts of the world. There is only one reality and that is not the one defined by Naturalism.

2Cor 10:7 You are looking at things as they are outwardly. If anyone is confident in himself that he is Christ's, let him consider this again within himself, that just as he is Christ's, so also are we.

2Cor 10:8 For even if I should boast somewhat further about our authority, which the Lord gave for building you up and not for destroying you, I shall not be put to shame,

Paul continues to defend himself against the false teachers. Jesus warned us of false prophets:

Matt 7:15 "Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves.

Matt 7:16 "You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes, nor figs from thistles, are they?"

Paul warns the people to look carefully at what they see from the false teachers and from Paul and they will see the difference. Paul seems to be referring to the leader of the false teachers when he considers the confidence in that person that he belongs to Christ. Paul says that both that person and he are making the claim to be disciples of Jesus Christ. But Paul has much to back up his claim in his conversion, the churches he has started, and the persecution he has endured. He has to continue boasting of his accomplishments for Christ and to assert that the authority given him by Christ has the goal of building up the churches and certainly not for destroying them. Because of his love for Christ, he will not be put to shame by the false teachers.

2Cor 10:9 for I do not wish to seem as if I would terrify you by my letters.

2Cor 10:10 For they say, "His letters are weighty and strong, but his personal presence is unimpressive, and his speech contemptible."

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

2Cor 10:12 For we are not bold to class or compare ourselves with some of those who commend themselves; but when they measure themselves by themselves, and compare themselves with themselves, they are without understanding.

Paul was willing to be stern with his letters when necessary. He also could be firm in person. The false teachers said that Paul was not a man of great personal charisma and charm. They even said that his speech was contemptible as they criticized his use of Greek. However Paul could certainly show mastery of language if he wished to do so but his purpose was not to overwhelm people with his personal skills but with the Gospel. He had already clearly stated his motives of speech:

1Cor 2:1 And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God.

1Cor 2:2 For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.

1Cor 2:3 And I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling.

1Cor 2:4 And my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,

1Cor 2:5 that your faith should not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.

There are many people today that are deceiving people by their charisma and charm but we should always look clearly at the message rather than the messenger. Humans comparing themselves to other humans are using fallible standards. We also should never compare the preaching of someone to that of another just based upon human skills in delivering messages. Always clearly examine the message.

2Cor 10:13 But we will not boast beyond our measure, but within the measure of the sphere which God apportioned to us as a measure, to reach even as far as you.

2Cor 10:14 For we are not overextending ourselves, as if we did not reach to you, for we were the first to come even as far as you in the gospel of Christ;

2Cor 10:15 not boasting beyond our measure, that is, in other men's labors, but with the hope that as your faith grows, we shall be, within our sphere, enlarged even more by you,

2Cor 10:16 so as to preach the gospel even to the regions beyond you, and not to boast in what has been accomplished in the sphere of another.

Paul was not interested in building a mega church or in establishing himself as a great teacher. His ministry was defined by God and he was content to work within that sphere of influence. Similarly we each have been given our path:

Eph 2:10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

In America today we see the opposite of the humility of Paul as we see people boasting of numbers of members rather than in the quality of the ministry. The key is discipleship as Paul clearly demonstrated in his letters his desire to continue to assist the believers to work on sanctification. He had founded the church at Corinth and others had assisted in its proper growth but all the true workers are one:

1Cor 3:6 I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth.

1Cor 3:7 So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth.

1Cor 3:8 Now he who plants and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor.

1Cor 3:9 For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building.

Also as their faith grows its influence will even extend to Paul and the other Apostles and disciples. In the church of Jesus Christ we are all one, just as Jesus and the Father are one:

John 17:20 "I do not ask in behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word;

John 17:21 that they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us; that the world may believe that Thou didst send Me.

John 17:22 "And the glory which Thou hast given Me I have given to them; that they may be one, just as We are one;

John 17:23 I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, that the world may know that Thou didst send Me, and didst love them, even as Thou didst love Me.

2Cor 10:17 But he who boasts, let him boast in the Lord.

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

David and Jeremiah also realized that we must only boast in the Lord:

Psa 20:7 Some boast in chariots, and some in horses; But we will boast in the name of the Lord, our God.

Jer 9:23 Thus says the Lord, "Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches;

Jer 9:24 but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord who exercises lovingkindness, justice, and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things, "declares the Lord.

Anybody can commend himself but all will learn that the only commending that matters is that which comes from the Lord!

Matt 25:21 "His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave; you were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things, enter into the joy of your master.'