

2 Corinthians Chapter 10

2 Corinthians 10:1 "Now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, who in presence [am] base among you, but being absent am bold toward you:"

“Meekness” is a gentle and humble attitude that expresses itself in patient endurance of unfair treatment. Someone who is meek is not bitter or angry nor do they seek vengeance when wronged.

Gentleness is similar in meaning and when applied to a person in a position of authority, refers to leniency. Gentle people refuse to retaliate even when it is in their power to do so.

"Base", in the verse above, means humiliated, depressed, cast down, humble, or of low degree. Paul is saying that his person is not overwhelming to anyone. We will find in this chapter that Paul is answering some of the accusations made by people who were trying to change the church at Corinth and its teachings. Jesus was meek and gentle, until someone started making God's house a house of merchandise.

Paul is saying, that he can say what is really in his heart in this letter. His boldness comes from righteous indignation for the false teaching that was trying to creep into the church at Corinth. He might seem base to them, but when it came to matters of God, he was bold. Paul was a small man, possibly plain in appearance, and was not an overwhelming speaker. He was, however, very talented in writing his thoughts down.

It seems that some had mistaken his gentleness and meekness toward them for weakness and had accused him of cowardice, by being bold only when writing to them from a safe distance.

2 Corinthians 10:2 "But I beseech [you], that I may not be bold when I am present with that confidence, wherewith I think to be bold against some, which think of us as if we walked according to the flesh."

It seemed as if the person who was bringing in the false teaching, was also attacking the character of Paul. They had accused Paul as walking after the flesh. Paul would stand up boldly and denounce this false accusation.

Paul was capable of bold confrontation, but sought to spare the rebellious minority not to force him to display his boldness by confronting them.

2 Corinthians 10:3 "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh:"

I have said over and over, that the Christian is in the world, but not of the world. Paul is saying here, I may be housed in flesh, but I am not a flesh man. The battles that Paul had been fighting were spiritual battles. His weapons were spiritual as well. He describes his armor in Ephesians 6 starting with verse 11.

Some at Corinth had wrongly accused him of walking in the flesh in a moral sense. Paul affirmed that he did walk in the flesh in a physical sense; though possessing the power and authority of an apostle of Jesus Christ, he was a real human being.

2 Corinthians 10:4 "(For the weapons of our warfare [are] not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)"

The war that Paul was fighting is still going on today. It is the battle between the flesh and the spirit.

Ephesians 6:12 "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]."

We will find in all of Paul's battles, he did not use a sword to fight a physical battle. God fought Paul's battles for him. The formidable spiritual strongholds manned by the forces of hell can be demolished only by spiritual weapons wielded by godly believers, such as the "sword of the Spirit" (Eph. 6:17), since only the truth of God's Word can defeat satanic falsehoods.

2 Corinthians 10:5 "Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;"

You can sit around and imagine all sorts of terrible things. Paul says cast them down. Do not allow yourself to start imagining all sorts of terrible things. Thoughts, ideas, speculations, reasonings, philosophies, and false religions are the ideological forts in which men barricade themselves against God and the gospel. The mind is where evil imaginations begin.

We find in the next Scripture that it our responsibility to guard over our own mind.

1 Peter 1:13 "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;"

The devil tempts man in his mind. The mind is an enemy of God. A true Christian takes on the mind of Christ. That means our mind obeys Christ to the utmost.

2 Corinthians 10:6 "And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled."

Paul is saying that these disobedient will conform to Christ in truth. He says that he had rather his preaching and explaining would win them, but he will do more if he has to.

Paul would not stand idly by while enemies of the faith assaulted a church under his care. He was ready to purge them out as he did at Ephesus (1 Tim. 1:19-20), as soon as the Corinthian church was complete in its obedience. When that happened, the lines would be clearly drawn between the repentant, obedient majority and the disobedient minority.

2 Corinthians 10:7 "Do ye look on things after the outward appearance? If any man trust to himself that he is Christ's, let him of himself think this again, that, as he [is] Christ's, even so [are] we Christ's."

It appears that these trouble-makers had even gone so far as to say that Paul was not of Christ. Paul is warning the Corinthians to not look at outward appearance. Paul is the one who led them to Christ. How could he lead them to Christ if he were not of Christ himself? He says if you are of Christ, then certainly I am of Christ.

In light of what the Corinthians knew about Paul, how could some of them possibly believe that He was a false apostle and the false teachers were true apostles? Unlike Paul, the false apostles had founded no churches and had suffered no persecution for the cause of Christ. Paul could call on his companions and even Ananias as witnesses to the reality of his Damascus Road experience; there were no witnesses to verify the false apostles' alleged encounters with the risen, glorified Christ.

For the sake of argument, Paul did not at this point deny the false apostles' claims as he did later (in 11:13-25). He merely pointed out that he too, can and does claim to belong to Christ. To decide between the conflicting personal claims, the Corinthians needed only to consider the objective evidence, as he commanded them to do earlier in this verse.

2 Corinthians 10:8 "For though I should boast somewhat more of our authority, which the Lord hath given us for edification, and not for your destruction, I should not be ashamed:"

Paul is saying, if anyone has a right to boast it would be me. The Lord Jesus Christ had appeared to Paul on the road to Damascus, and gave him authority to minister to the Gentiles. Paul is not meaning this to brag on himself, but to shame them for their bragging. The Lord had raised Paul up, not Paul.

The Lord gave Paul his authority to edify and strengthen the church; that he had done so at Corinth proves the genuineness of his claim to apostolic calling. Far from edifying the Corinthian church, the false apostles had brought confusion, divisiveness and turmoil to it. That showed that their authority did not come from the Lord, who seeks only to build His church, not tear it down.

2 Corinthians 10:9 "That I may not seem as if I would terrify you by letters."

We know that Paul wrote at least 2 letters. Paul's letters were very strong, but that is what they needed to keep them straightened out.

False apostles had accused Paul of being an abusive leader and of trying to intimidate the Corinthians in his letters. Paul's goal, however, was not to terrify the Corinthians but to bring them to repentance, because he loved them.

2 Corinthians 10:10 "For [his] letters, say they, [are] weighty and powerful; but [his] bodily presence [is] weak, and [his] speech contemptible."

Some of this was certainly true. Paul did write powerful letters to them. He also was a small man in stature. "Paul" means small. He was not a flashy minister. Even his speaking was not as powerful as his letters.

The false teachers had claimed that in contrast to his bold, forceful letters, that in person he lacked the presence, charisma and personality of a truly great leader. They no doubt supported their view by portraying Paul's departure after his "painful" visit.

God called each of us to our own calling. One can write, another preach, another teach, another heal, and so on. We should use the ability that God has given us to the very fullest amount we can.

2 Corinthians 10:11 "Let such a one think this, that, such as we are in word by letters when we are absent, such [will we be] also in deed when we are present."

Paul is saying, do not think that I will let up when I come to you in person. What I have been giving you is truth, and will remain the truth. Paul says, it is the same message, whether I write it to you, or give it in a speech before you.

Paul denied the false charges against him and affirmed his integrity. What he was in his letters he was to be when present with them.

2 Corinthians 10:12 "For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise."

When you have to brag on yourself, there is not much there to brag about. Paul refuses to be of that sort.

It is a mark of Paul's humility that he refused to compare himself with others, or engage in self-promotion. His only personal concern was what the Lord thought of him, though he needed to defend his apostleship so the Corinthians would not, in turning from him, turn from the truth to lies.

Paul pointed out the folly of the false apostles' boasting. They had invented false standards that they could meet, then proclaimed themselves superior for meeting them.

2 Corinthians 10:13 "But we will not boast of things without [our] measure, but according to the measure of the rule which God hath distributed to us, a measure to reach even unto you."

It is not bragging to tell of the call of God in your life. That is just stating a fact.

In contrast to the proud, arrogant, boastful false apostles, Paul refused to say anything about himself or his ministry that was not true and God given.

Paul was content to stay within the bounds of the ministry God had given him, that of being the apostle to the Gentiles. The apostle again demonstrated his humility by refusing to boast of his own accomplishments, preferring to speak only of what Christ had done through him.

2 Corinthians 10:14 "For we stretch not ourselves beyond [our measure], as though we reached not unto you: for we are come as far as to you also in [preaching] the gospel of Christ:"

This is Paul saying; let my preaching speak for its self. Paul reminds them that the church at Corinth was under his jurisdiction, since he started the church there. He knew others would come, but he was the very first to minister to them, and he felt it his responsibility to keep them in sound doctrine.

2 Corinthians 10:15 "Not boasting of things without [our] measure, [that is], of other men's labors; but having hope, when your faith is increased, that we shall be enlarged by you according to our rule abundantly,"

Paul had not gone into a church that someone else started and tried to impose his way. This was a church he had started himself, and another had come and tried to change it. Paul has every right to defend the church he started, and his self.

When the crisis in Corinth had been resolved and the Corinthians' faith strengthened, Paul would, with their help, expand his ministry into new areas.

2 Corinthians 10:16 "To preach the gospel in the [regions] beyond you, [and] not to boast in another man's line of things made ready to our hand."

Paul went into areas where they had not heard the gospel, and started new works. He was not building on someone else's work, but on his own.

This is speaking of areas in Rome and Spain (see Romans 15:24 and 28).

2 Corinthians 10:17 "But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

The thought of self-glory was repugnant to Paul; he boasted only in the Lord.

The following Scripture says it much better than I could.

Galatians 6:14 "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

To God be the glory for all things.

2 Corinthians 10:18 "For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth."

Self-commendation is both meaningless and foolish; the only true, meaningful commendation comes from God.

Let us look at a very good explanation of this from the Scriptures.

Luke 18:10-14 "Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican." "The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men [are], extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican." "I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess." "And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as [his] eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner." "I tell you, this man went down to his house justified [rather] than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

To exalt yourself means that no one else will do it. God is the Judge of all. Pray that He will exalt you.

2 Corinthians 10 Questions

1. What does "base", in verse 1, mean?
2. What is Paul doing in this chapter?
3. When was Jesus not meek and gentle?
4. What does Paul's boldness come from?
5. Describe Paul's outward appearance.
6. He was very talented in what?
7. What terrible thing had they been saying about Paul in verse 2?
8. For though we walk in the flesh, we do not ____ after the _____.
9. What kind of battles had Paul been fighting?
10. Where can you find the armor worn by a Christian?
11. Who fought for Paul?
12. Give a good example of this?
13. What did Paul say to do with imaginations?
14. A true Christian takes on the _____ of Christ.

15. In verse 7, what does Paul tell them is proof he is of Christ?
16. Who had the most right to boast?
17. What things were true about the description they had given of Paul?
18. What are some of the different things God calls us to do?
19. What is Paul saying to them in verse 14?
20. Why did Paul have the right to correct these at Corinth?
21. Let him glory in the _____.
22. Who is approved in verse 18?