

TITLE: PAUL'S DEFENSE
TEXT: 2 CORINTHIANS 10

INTRO: In ch. 3-7 Paul spoke about the true minister of God (his ministry, his preaching, his perseverance, his motivation, the expectations of him, and his comfort). In ch. 10-13 we see why he discussed these things – to distinguish himself from the false teachers at Corinth. Ch. 10 is primarily Paul's defense (showing a difference between them and him)!

I. PAUL'S DEFENSE OF HIS WARFARE (v. 1-6):

A. Paul's boldness (v. 1-2)

(v. 1) *Now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness & gentleness of Christ, who in presence am base (low) among you, but being absent am bold toward you:*

1. Paul's 1st appeal to the false brethren is to the meekness (strength controlled, gentleness, humility) of Christ (our Head). Be humble as *He* was humble! If they would do this, Paul wouldn't need to write the rest of what he's going to say.
2. "I'm base/lowly when I'm w/you, but bold when I'm absent." This isn't Paul being lowly (humble) among them; this is their accusation against him: he's lowly in presence (weak -**v. 10**). If you can't defeat the doctrine, attack the character!
 - a. I.e., political campaigns, religious debates, etc. (they either attack the person, or at least just change the subject!)
 - b. ***John 8:45-48**– "Which of you convicts me of sin?" Because they couldn't refute Him, they verbally attacked Him!
3. They say, "he's bold when he's not here!" So Paul says, Okay, I *am* absent, & I *will be* bold then (in this letter)! But...(v. 2).
(v. 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.*
 1. I beseech you (I beg you), don't make me be "bold" with you (i.e., exercise authority/discipline). I don't *want* to, but I will! Paul legitimately did **not** want to be bold (elders can relate). He'd much rather they fix the problem *before* he gets there.
 2. But he knew how to be bold (just ask the Galatians -e.g., **Gal 3:1**– "*O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth...*"). Of course, this was a **letter**, which these Corinthians claimed was the only time he was bold.
 3. So he warns them not to underestimate him! He **will** be bold with them when he arrives! Don't mistake humility with weakness! Humility requires great strength, and just because a brother/sister is humble, doesn't mean he/she can't exercise Christian strength in rebuking you! Elders that rule well are good examples of this strength & authority under control.
 4. Remember that, just as he says in this verse, this is not addressed to all at Corinth, but "some" (cf. **1:14**). These "some" thought of him as if he "walked according to the flesh" (i.e., not spiritually; not like a Christian should). He used this phrase in **1:17**, where these "some" were accusing him of being "fickle" in not coming when he said he would. At least there they had a fact to discuss (i.e., his delay in visiting, which he explains in **1:23-24**). Here it's just a personal attack.

B. Paul's warfare (v. 3-6)

(v. 3) *For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh:*

1. Paul did **not** walk according to the flesh (i.e., not spiritually); he always walked (lived) as a great Christian example.
2. But if this is your accusation, then know this: We do not *war* after the flesh (**v. 4-5; Eph 6:12**– *we wrestle not against flesh & blood, but against principalities...powers...rulers of the darkness of this world...spiritual wickedness in high places*).
3. Paul's adversaries had no spiritual content to them. They were about earthly glory, and any fight in them would be physical, not spiritual (they had no spiritual depth; same with the religious liberals today as well). This was **not** Paul's type of fight.
(v. 4) *(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds);*
 1. The war analogy shows how serious Christianity is (it's not a *physical* war; it's *spiritual*, which is much more dangerous)!
 2. Our weapon isn't physical (it's the word of God, the sword of the Spirit–**Eph 6:17**), and it's very powerful!
 3. It pulls down (destroys) strongholds/fortresses (something fortified; something designed to stand under attack).**(v. 5)** *(NAS–"We are") casting down imaginations & every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, & bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience (compliance, submission) of Christ.*
 1. We are destroying imaginations (thoughts, reasonings, opinions). So many "believers" base their beliefs on emotions & opinions (& *not* the Bible). But the Word (the weapon) will destroy every opinion (cf. **Mt 15:13**).
 2. We are destroying every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God. Again, this is done **only** by God's Word -anything else is just another opinion. And no false doctrine/idea/opinion can stand against the Word (it disproves them all)!
 3. With it we "bring every thought (purpose) into captivity to...Christ." Paul's words present a complete military victory over every opponent of the Word ("*...to the obedience of Christ*"). The Word can & will win **every** battle. Christ is the King, & His Word will defeat *every* enemy! This doesn't mean every one will accept it in this life. But it does mean they can't defeat/disprove it! In the end, it will win! And guaranteed you want to be on this side when all is said & done!
- But to do this *you* need to bring every thought (idea, etc.) into obedience (cf. **Mt 12:36**– "*every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment*").
4. While the false brethren build themselves up (fight a carnal battle for earthly glory), these are the things Paul is doing!

(v. 6) *And having in a readiness (being prepared) to revenge (punish) all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.*

Application of this to the Corinthians: we're ready to punish all disobedience (in the false brethren), when you (sound brethren) are fully obedient. Paul's purpose is to deal with sin in the congregation. However he sees the opportunity & the need to include the sound brethren in this, which can only happen with their complete obedience.

- An important point from this is that, as the Lord's church, our obedience isn't complete if we don't separate ourselves from disobedient brethren, rebuke them, and encourage them to repent.

CONCLUSION: Throughout this chapter Paul defends himself against accusations made by false brethren. Regarding the Christian warfare, we've seen that when someone opposes God & His ways, he will lose! God's apostles rebuked false teachers & brethren, and still today His Word does the same if we wield it properly. But we have to use it on ourselves first. *We* have to submit to it before we can help others submit to it. Will you bring every thought of yours into captivity to the obedience of Christ?

II. PAUL'S DEFENSE OF HIS AUTHORITY (v. 7-11): This is a transition from the weapon to the warrior.

A. Acknowledgment of his Christianity (v. 7). In this verse we see an example of proper judgment (cf. **Jn 7:24**).

1. Unrighteous judgment (v. 7a): *Do ye look on things after the outward appearance?* In the Greek, it's likely that this is a statement, not a question ("you look on things after the outward appearance"). They should know better than this (and so should we). When God chose David (**1 Sam 16:7**), He told Samuel, "*man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart*". Paul's physical appearance & presentation mean nothing (v. 10; cf. **1 Cor 2:3-4**).
2. Righteous judgment (v. 7b): *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.* "If you're really Christians, acknowledge that I am too!" Look at the evidence (my teaching, & miracles –**12:12**). John said to "*test the spirits...*" (**1 Jn 4:1**), so we **can** know!
 - a. We can tell when someone is truly "Christ's" or not: **1**) by the outward evidence (did he obey the gospel?), & **2**) by his lifestyle & attitude (is he, like most professing Christians, unwilling to even study the Bible with you?)
 - b. Paul passes all these tests with flying colors! Only a false brother would claim Paul wasn't a Christian!

B. Acknowledgement of his Warning (v. 8-11)

(v. 8) *For though I should boast* ("vaunt, in a good sense or bad; glory, joy, rejoice"-Strong) *somewhat more of our authority, which the Lord hath given us for edification, and not for your destruction, I should not be ashamed* (disgraced, dishonored):

1. I *can* boast (glory, rejoice) of *our* authority. The word for boast can be positive or negative. Paul's glorying in his authority is obviously positive. Why? Because it was given by the Lord (compared to the authority the false brethren claimed).
 - Also, he can glory in his authority because it was for the purpose of building up the brethren, not tearing them down (i.e., he didn't misuse his authority). So he can defend his authority, as well as the manner in which he used it (e.g., **1 Cor 5:5** – the disfellowshipping of the fornicating brother was for destruction of the flesh, not the spirit).
2. I'm not shamed or disgraced (I owe no apology); it isn't a disgrace to me to boast, because the source is the Lord, not me!
(v. 9-10) *That I may not seem as if I would terrify you by letters. For his letters, say they, are weighty & powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, & his speech* (lit. "the word") *contemptible [of no account]* (despised, of no value).
 1. What did Paul look like? It's assumed from passages like this that he was small, sick, weak, he stuttered, etc. (his bodily presence is weak – he doesn't command respect). Paul himself said "*I was w/you in weakness, & fear, & much trembling. And my...preaching was not w/enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit & power*" (**1 Cor 2:3-4**).
 2. But some at Corinth were bold enough to make this claim ("he talks a big talk, but..."). Again, this was their only weapon!
(v. 11) *Let such an 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.* This is fair warning! As bold as you acknowledge me to be in letters is how bold I'll be face to face! Of course, they probably responded to this bold warning (by letter) the same way they did to his other letters, claiming that he was all talk.

III. PAUL'S DEFENSE OF HIS BOASTING (v. 12-18):

(v. 12) *For we dare not make ourselves of the number* (include ourselves with), *or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.*

1. Please don't mistake us with those who commend (approve) themselves. "Commend" can be positive or negative: negative – **3:1** (selfish motives); positive – commending/approving themselves by their godly actions (**4:2; 6:4; 7:11; 12:11**).
2. Good lesson for us: what's your motive? Do you seek recognition/glory from the brethren? If so, you probably spend lots of time commending yourself (in the negative sense– **3:1**). Or do you simply want to obey & glorify God, while edifying His people? If so, you probably put all your effort into approving yourself by your godly actions (as per **4:2; 6:4-10**). Motive is the difference!
3. They measure (estimate) themselves by themselves (i.e., the standard by which they judge themselves is themselves)! It's about competition for earthly glory; this is "not wise!" These are the people Paul is dealing with at Corinth.

(v. 13) *But we will not boast of things without* (beyond) *our measure, but according to the measure of the rule* (sphere, standard) *which God hath distributed to us, a measure to reach even unto you.* Again, we see **two** types of boasting in these verses:

1. Generally speaking, we *don't* boast beyond the sphere of authority God has given (specifics in v. 14-16). But we *will* boast/glory in what He *has* given, & this measurement (yard stick, ruler) reaches to you (i.e., we have authority over you).
2. Also, the idea here is that the false brethren at Corinth *were* boasting beyond their measure (i.e., they had no authority).

(v. 14-16) *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: Not boasting of things without* (beyond) *our measure, that is, of other men's labours; but having hope, when your faith is increased, that we shall be enlarged by you according to our rule abundantly, 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* (boasting in someone else's work).

1. "We don't claim authority God hasn't given." God chose Paul for the missionary journeys (**Ac 13:3**), which extended to Corinth, where Paul's work established the congregation. "So we *do* have this authority, unlike these men who are boasting in our labors."
2. He didn't want to "*boast in another man's line....*" This is about motive. Paul was fine w/Apollos building on his work (**1 Cor 3:4-7**), but *he* wanted to preach where Christ wasn't already named, not building on another man's foundation (**Rom 15:20**).
3. Notice that this "rule/authority" is not about personal power; it's about preaching the gospel & saving souls. Paul explains this to them, then says he wants them to help him enlarge/extend this rule (i.e., "*to preach the gospel in regions beyond you*") when their faith was increased. Do you think his adversaries were interested in doing this? Was this their motive too?!
4. Today, contrary to the denominational set up, **no** human has authority beyond a local congregation (cf. **1 Pet 5:2**–"*among you*").
(v. 17-18) *he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. For not he that commends himself is approved, but whom the Lord commends.* Glory **only** in the Lord, recognizing that you're *never* the source of salvation, for yourself or others. When you evangelize, remember that *you* aren't the author; you're simply the messenger. Your commendation will only come from the Lord (when you obey Him).

CONCLUSION: As we read the NT, we see that Paul did a lot of boasting/glorying. But it was always in Jesus, giving *Him* the credit (cf. Rom 15:17). When we're among a **very few** who hold to the truth, it can be easy to boast (in the negative sense). We must always be aware of our attitude & motive. Do we look at these people as our opponents who are wrong (& we're right), or as souls who are lost? If the former, then *we too* are in the wrong! ***Jer 9:23-24** – in what do you glory? What's the most important thing to you?