



2 Corinthians 10

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2 Corinthians 10.

Topics.

- Walking in the flesh.
- The weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh.
- Taking every thought captive.
- Waging war according to the flesh
- What we say by letter when absent, we do when present.
- We will not boast in the labours of others.
- Let the one who boasts, boast in the lord.

The previous chapter: in the previous chapter Paul spoke of the Corinthians collection for the suffering brothers and sisters at Jerusalem, the principal of sowing and reaping and about the Corinthians having all sufficiency in all things so that they might abound in every good work. He said God would supply and multiply their seed for sowing and increase the harvest and thanked God for His inexpressible Gift.

NOTE: for information concerning people, places and the meaning of words see Map Locations and People of the Bible, and Bible Dictionary on Website Menu.

- In certain chapters this letter is written as though Paul is having a conversation with the Corinthians (i.e., he asks them a question and then answers it etc.).
- Though Paul's letter is directed to the Corinthian church the content applies to any church or believer in the same situations.

2 CORINTHIANS 10:1-2

Walking in the Flesh.

- **2 Corinthians 10:1-2:** I, Paul, myself entreat you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ—I who am humble when face to face with you, but bold toward you when I am away! ²I beg of you that when I am present I may not have to show boldness with such confidence as I count on showing against some who suspect us of walking according to the flesh.

The word flesh refers to self, ego, pride, lust and greed etc., it is carnally minded, meaning it is always minded to satisfy the demands of self. Walking according to the flesh is living a lifestyle in any of the following; sexual adulteries, orgies or unlawful sex, drunkenness, sorcery and idolatry, throwing fits of anger and finding reasons to argue and quarrel. It is being envious and jealous of others and deliberately causing strife and such like.

Today the word flesh is replaced by terms such as, the lower nature which is controlled by self, ego and pride, it is that part of us that says, "me first." In contrast to the flesh is the Spirit which refers to the higher nature within us, the godly nature that is not only God focused, but also others focused and desires to honour God and the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Walking in the Spirit means showing mercy, grace, kindness, patience, forgiveness compassion and love toward others. It is that part of us that considers God and cares about the well-being of others.

The Weapons of our Warfare are not of the Flesh.

- **2 Corinthians 10:3-6:** For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. ⁴For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. ⁵We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, ⁶being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete.

Paul in these verses is saying that though they live in a fallen corrupted human body full of sinful dysfunctions and aberrations, they do not live according to its demands, meaning they do not live to satisfy self, ego and pride etc. The words, "We are not waging war according to the flesh," means that they are not arguing and quarrelling from pride and ego, but rather reasoning in the spirit of meekness and peace.

NOTICE: the words, "The weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds" are in the context of arguments and prideful opinions that are raised against the knowledge of God, therefore the weapons of Paul's warfare in this context is about destroying these arguments and prideful opinions which no doubt are causing strife and divisions amongst the Corinthian assembly.

Taking every thought captive: Paul's statement, "We take every thought captive to obey Christ," is not referring to Paul's thoughts or the thoughts of those ministering with him, but rather to the thoughts of those who are trying to argue against the knowledge of God. It is their thoughts, expressed in their prideful, lofty argumentative opinions that Paul is saying he takes captive to the word of God. He is fully aware there are certain leading men amongst the Corinthian church who are accusing him and those ministering with them of living a lifestyle in the flesh and speaking against his teachings (v2).

Naturally he is concerned that these men will have a negative influence on the Corinthian brothers and sisters and hinder their growth in the LORD thus the reason he says that he is ready to punish those who are accusing him and those with him of walking in the flesh and those who are in rebellion to the Good News of the Gospel so that the Corinthian brothers and sisters obedience to Christ can be made complete.

Waging war according to the flesh: Paul's words:

- The weapons of our warfare (v3).

Embrace the idea of reasoning from the wisdom that is from above in contrasted to the wisdom that is from below. James in his writings shows the source of these two very different types of wisdom in the following words:

- If you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace (James 3:14-18).

Since the phrase, "The weapons of our warfare" is in the context of prideful men arguing against the knowledge of God, the weapons Paul has in mind refers to the wisdom that is from above which is pure, peaceable, gentle, kind, patient, compassionate and full of mercy and grace. It is without partiality and without hypocrisy (pretence) and open to reason. Paul is saying he and those ministering with him destroy arguments using the wisdom that is from above and not by arguing, retaliating or entering into strife and prideful quarrels.

Look at what is before your Eyes.

- **2 Corinthians 10:7-11:** Look at what is before your eyes. If anyone is confident that he is Christ's, let him remind himself that just as he is Christ's, so also are we. ⁸For even if I boast a little too much of our authority, which the Lord gave for building you up and not for destroying you, I will not be ashamed. ⁹I do not want to appear to be frightening you with my letters. ¹⁰For they say, "His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech of no account." ¹¹Let such a person understand that what we say by letter when absent, we do when present.

With the words, "Look at what is before your eyes" (v7) Paul is asking the Corinthian brothers and sisters to take an honest and in-depth look at the leading men amongst them who are not only arguing against the knowledge of God, but also accusing Paul and those ministering with him of walking in the flesh and not living the lifestyle that they are teaching others. There were amongst the Corinthian brothers and sisters' false teachers who valued themselves on their external advantages, and laid claim to special honour in the work of the ministry, because they considered themselves superior in personal appearance, in rank and eloquence to Paul. Such things were highly valued among the Greeks, and a considerable part of the effort of Paul in these letters is to show that these things cannot be used as evidence that those who have them are sent from God thus Paul is saying, "You look on things after the outward appearance" he is reproving the Corinthians for judging, by outward appearances. They are being enticed and carried away with show and parade...they were admiring and esteeming the riches, eloquence, haughty airs, established authority, and the likable and charming manner of the false apostles who were in opposition to Paul. In the next chapter Paul calls these self-exalted teachers:

- False apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ and as angels of light who are servants of righteousness (2 Cor. 11:12-15)

And since these men are having such a powerful influence over the Corinthians Paul spends almost all the chapter in defending his ministry. In contrast to these prideful false apostles Paul's outward circumstances of life was one of lowly work (making tents) humbleness, poverty, afflictions, and persecutions. Paul is telling the Corinthian brothers and sisters not to think that men are called by God to be ministers of the Gospel simply because they have authority and dominance are eloquent in their personal appearance and have oratory skills that surpass most, but rather look at the message they are proclaiming and their character i.e., is it one of prideful selfish ambition, do they care more about themselves than they do their congregations or are they humble, merciful and showing grace and love toward those who follow them. If after examining the evidence in this manner and they still remain confident that these men are brothers in Christ, then it should have become extremely clear to them that so is Paul and those ministering with him.

NOTICE: the words, "The Lord gave us authority for building you up and not for destroying you" (v8), shows that ministers of the Lord should always be using the knowledge of God in the following three ways:

1. Encourage and enhance the life of those they are teaching.
2. To teach them right behaviour that honours God and fulfils the Royal Law, "Love your neighbour as yourself."
3. To teach the path to eternal life.

And never use the glorious message of the cross and the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ for their own selfish ambition, power fame, wealth or riches by twisting and distorting the Scriptures or by intimidating and controlling their congregations.

What we say by letter when absent, we do when present: certain leading men are not only telling the Corinthians that Paul is a weak man and his teaching is of no importance and what he writes means nothing (v10) but they are also accusing Paul and those ministering with him of not practising what they preach thus the reason for Paul's statement:

- Let such a person understand that what we say by letter when absent, we do when present (v11).

He is telling the Corinthians that whatever he writes or teaches they do, he does not live contrary to his teaching nor do those ministering with him. In the next chapter Paul's is so concerned that so called super-apostles (2 Cor. 11:5) a title for men who are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ (2 Cor. 11:13) are influencing the brothers and sister in the Corinthian church away from Christ he use his suffering to prove the reality of his faith. Paul unwillingly but to show the reality of his faith tells the Corinthian church he has: -

- Suffered imprisonments, countless beatings (often near death) was five times whipped with thirty-nine lashes and three times beaten with rods. Once stoned, three times shipwrecked and left two days adrift at sea. On his frequent journeys he was in danger from rivers, from robbers, from the Jews, from Gentiles, in the cities, in the wilderness, at sea and from false brothers. He toiled long hours to support himself and to minister to others and suffered hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure and apart from all these there was the daily pressure and anxiety upon him for all the churches (2 Cor. 11:23-28).

No-one is going to remain in anything if they are going to suffer in this manner, thus it is enduring through hardships and troubles that prove our faith not blessings, success, riches and wealth since everyone wants these, but none of us would choose to remain in persecutions unless there is something going on within us that is far greater than our own passions and supersedes all other things in this world.

2 CORINTHIANS 10:12

We Dare Not Compare Ourselves with other Men.

- **2 Corinthians 10:12:** Not that we dare to classify or compare ourselves with some of those who are commending themselves. But when they measure themselves by one another and compare themselves with one another, they are without understanding.

There is no-way Paul and those ministering with him would even dare to measure their knowledge, skills, abilities and talents against each other as certain other leading men were doing amongst the Corinthian congregation. No-doubt this refers to the deceitful workers mentioned in the next chapter who disguise themselves as apostles of Christ (2 Cor. 11:5, 13). These men were boasting of their talents, abilities and attainments (a characteristic of pride) it is certain they had high opinions of themselves and undervalued all others since they made themselves and their own achievements, skills, abilities and talents the standard while overlooking the attainments of others. Since they were measuring themselves against each other and were full of self-commendation and self-praise it is certain they also believed that their styles of worship, their traditions, customs and their characters were in their own estimation the standard to be followed. They would have seen little value in those who differed from them since they looked upon themselves as being the true measure of faith, humility, zeal, and godliness and therefore would have considered all others who differed from them to be less, regardless of how good, skilled or talented they may have been. They were inflated with pride, self-conceit and self-love and no-doubt self-satisfied and pleased with their own character and their attainments and therefore were blinded to their own real character, thus when Paul said: -

- We dare to classify or compare ourselves with some of those who are commending themselves (v12)

He was basically saying that he and those who minister with him would not dare to compare themselves or associate with men who exalt each other above their followers in such a prideful and egotistical manner.

2 CORINTHIANS 10:13-18

We will Not Boast in the Labours of Others.

- **2 Corinthians 10:13-18:** But we will not boast beyond limits, but will boast only with regard to the area of influence God assigned to us, to reach even to you. ¹⁴For we are not overextending (Stretch in the KJV) ourselves, as though we did not reach you. We were the first to come all the way to you with the gospel of Christ. ¹⁵We do not boast beyond limit in the labours of others. But our hope is that as your faith increases, our area of influence among you may be greatly enlarged, ¹⁶so that we may preach the gospel in lands beyond you, without boasting of work already done in another's area of influence. ¹⁷"Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord." ¹⁸For it is not the one who commends himself who is approved, but the one whom the Lord commends.

NOTICE: Paul was the first to take the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ to the Corinthians (v15).

Paul's statement, "We will not boast beyond limits" (v13) means they will only boast in what their own ministry has achieved and in how much the Corinthian's have been influenced for good contrasted to leading men amongst the Corinthian assembly (who didn't established the church) boasting of their own personal greatness. Paul's desire was that the Corinthian's through sharing their faith with others would influence people in the surrounding area to embrace the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. In this way Paul's influence in the Corinthian's would be enlarged through others accepting the Gospel and leave Paul and those with him free to take the Gospel to regions beyond the Corinthian church so that they would not be working in an area where others were establishing new churches.

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The false apostles at Corinth were speaking against Paul and his teaching and thereby causing divisions so that they could get the oversight of the work that Paul had started at Corinth. No-doubt they taught a system of doctrines which flattered and appealed to self-love and falsely accused and slandered Paul (the founder of the church) so that they could gain the control and power over the brothers and sisters within the church that Paul had successfully established. This is an evil that has prevailed throughout all ages by those who are in the ministry not to serve God but to serve their own selfish ambition pride and ego as were these so-called super apostles disguised as angles of light and ministers of Christ (2 Cor. 11:12-15).

Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord: (v17), these words carry the idea that we are to be approved or rejected by God and that He is to pass judgment on us, which will be in accordance with his estimate of our faith and our character and not, according to our own. If God approves us we will be saved, but if God does not, vain will be all our empty boasting and self-glory all our reliance on wealth, eloquence, learning or earthly honours none of them will save us from condemnation since not one of these things can purchase for us the free gift of eternal life. Paul is seriously showing that it should be the grand aim and purpose of our life to obtain God's favour rather than being anxious about obtaining man's approval.

All Christians and all Christian ministers are engaged in warfare they are at war with sin in their own hearts, and with sin wherever it exists on earth and therefore we should all repress any reliance and self-confidence in our talents, attainments or accomplishments for salvation to eternal life and everlasting glory. Of all flattery, not only is self-flattery, self-commendation and self-applause the worst, but they are self-deceit, foolish and as vain as they are proud. Instead of praising or commending ourselves, we should strive to approve ourselves to God and know that the LORD'S approval will be our best praise.

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.

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