

IN PRESENCE AM BASE AMONG YOU

2 CORINTHIANS 10:1 – 11:5



~ When Paul entered the city of Corinth, he walked into the pit of uttermost spiritual darkness. Those people were captivated by vain philosophies and meaningless religious rituals in which Satan himself used their own light against them to blind them to the Gospel. The church didn't even have a Bible to read from; only Paul's first letter and, perhaps, a single copy of portions from the Old Testament – if they could get that. Even so, Paul had a great victory in the church in Corinth, and many people had their spiritual eyes opened. That's when the warfare of the believers became very obvious and apparent — and it began to come alive to them.

This is the third radical subject change we've come to in second Corinthians. The first seven chapters concerned the comfort of the Holy Spirit in the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ; chapters eight and nine were all about giving; and, now, we reach another topic with such a sharp contrast that some have thought this could be a *THIRD* epistle to the Corinthians. Well, either way, we're going to examine the vindication and authentication of Paul's apostleship.

The church in Corinth was wildly and sharply divided as a church body. One of the first things Paul said was, "... *there are divisions among you.*" I think that was an understatement, but that's what the house of Chloe had told him. The majority was for Paul; and they respected his authority. The minority was opposed to Paul, and they completely rejected the authority Paul set forth in his epistles. Well, the first nine chapters were speaking to the majority; now, Paul is speaking to the minority. Let's call this a real minority report.

The minority were criticizing Paul severely, so Paul wrote some very strong corrections that even contained spiritual threats; Paul wrote big — but he was a physically small person. In fact, Paul would have been what we call "*insignificant in the Roman Empire.*" There's only one way to walk with

Christ in this world, friends – meek and gentle – like Jesus walked. Jesus never defended Himself. He faced the religious leaders sans circumlocution forthright; and He got right to the point, too. So, Paul beseeches this hateful minority in the meekness and gentleness of Christ....

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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:

~ I seriously doubt the Lord Jesus was as striking and defined in Personal appearance as the artists depict Him. Paul says He was meek and lowly; and meek and lowly is the fraternity pin of all genuine believers; they will follow Paul who followed Christ – and he is going to make that abundantly clear now. See, this idea that we’re going to bring Jesus down to some low level just because He was a carpenter is nonsense. Jesus isn’t building your floor today – He’s in Heaven at the right hand of God. Paul speaks with authority, and he makes no apologies. He was more conscience and aware of supernatural power than, likely, any man ever before him – and he exercised that supernaturally spiritual power. You may want to write that down, my friends. Here, Paul urges them not to force him to exercise his spiritual superiority in authority. Meek and gentle, friends – meek and gentle....

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.

~ Paul didn’t walk according to the flesh. The “*flesh*” can be understood in three ways in the Greek; it can be used to refer to the physical body that we have. It can also speak of mental weakness; that which is psychological. Or, it may refer to the old nature you and I have; our fallen nature – and that’s the spiritual side. So, “*according to the flesh*” in verse two could mean physically, psychologically, and/or spiritually. Paul certainly used this phrase in all three senses; but most frequently “*according to the flesh*” is used in connection with that old Adamic fallen nature. Paul said in Romans,

"... I know that in my body dwelleth no good thing." Here, Paul uses it in the psychological sense as he says, *".... we walk in the flesh."* Weakness.

Paul didn't depend on traveling in the energy of his flesh. He absolutely recognized and acknowledged his weaknesses. The warfare was a spiritual warfare; and that's what moved him along. We don't wrestle against flesh and blood. Paul, my friends, was no ordinary man regarding dependence upon the natural elements of this world; to wit, how he acted upon the flesh. Paul wasn't putting on some Madison Avenue campaign. Paul didn't advertise and organize human effort and energy. I suppose I don't minimize those things, but Paul didn't use them. Paul wasn't a personality boy on the television; of course, they didn't have television – but the false teachers of Paul's day were better actors than we have today; because they had to spout their Christian clichés live and on demand. Paul didn't soar to some beautiful and flowery language, and he didn't present to them as anti-Nero or anti-Caesar. Paul didn't come to Corinth to clean them up at the invitation of the fundamentalists. In fact, Paul said, *".... I desire to know nothing among you except Christ Jesus and Him crucified."* Paul had the entire perspective of the whole battlefield....

³ For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh:

⁴ (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)

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;

~ See, it's all spiritual warfare and the weapons are top secret. Those weapons aren't of the flesh – and they're so secret that Paul doesn't even list them here; and they're extremely effective. Some are positive and some are negative because they *"cast down imaginations"* – so, we know they're destructive. We're talking about the myriad reasoning's and philosophies and theories that mankind holds; particularly in relation to preconceived notions that men have about the Bible; but who are utterly ignorant of it. Those Greeks were pretty good at philosophy, friends. *"Every high thing"* –

well, the Acropolis was the highest thing around and guess what? – It's not there anymore.

Our only weapon is the Word of God; and, friends, I mean a *WHOLE* lot more than just the inspiration of Scripture, some creed, or plenary verbal inspiration; I mean *MUCH* more than that. Quoting poetry that is quasi-Biblical with some cute clichés thrown in with the pert epigram for good measure along with every imaginable form of philosophical argument, conjecture, and theory, but absent the sound doctrine of the Word of God, is breathtakingly meaningless, my beloved. That's what Paul faced.

When I say "*the Word of God*" in my reports, we stand on the confidence that it is the spiritual weapon to withstand any and all spiritual attacks; both offensive and defensive. Corinth was the Citadel of philosophy for a religion combined with the mixture of the two required worldly philosophies and theories. These require secret weapons; and that's what we're talking about. Paul used *NOTHING* but the Word of God – the sword of the Spirit. The Bible is the instructions for all spiritual secret weaponry available to mankind. Paul depended on the naked blade of his spiritual sword – period. The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation – make a note of that. It's very important to have confidence in the Scriptures; and to have that confidence, we have to actually learn and know what we are talking about....

⁶ And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

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.

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:

⁹ That I may not seem as if I would terrify you by letters.

~ Interestingly, we don't hear much about prayer in these epistles, but we know Paul was a great man of prayer. There's more to spiritual warfare than taking the whole Word of God, too – there is praying in the Holy Spirit for wisdom, judgment and discernment. Without that prayer – you can *FORGET* being anywhere even close to the wisdom of the Lord. When we study the Bible and pray properly, correctly and completely, then the Lord fights for us and gets the victory – and we get saved – and all the glory goes to Him – *THAT'S* how it works correctly. God always causes Christ living through us to triumph when He intercedes in our spiritual warfare.

I don't believe many people fully understand what I am writing sometimes. But I am sure of this: we won't win everyone. I thank God for this missionary effort He has given me to bring to you. Let's rejoice that the Word of God is actually being taught today. Remember, everything we are reading in this epistle was written to the opposition. Paul didn't want to terrorize these people; Paul wanted them to be edified and begin to grow. Sometimes we have to tear down before we can build up....

¹⁰ For his letters, say they, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible.

~ Paul was not an attractive man gracing the cover of all the latest magazines. When they saw Paul, they knew he didn't do what he did by physical strength. When Paul did preach, it wasn't by eloquence or charisma, either – it was by the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. I'm confident Paul had great ability; but weak presence and contemptible speech all add up to: Paul was only empowered and led by the Spirit of God, friends. There's no other way to explain this section of Scripture....

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.

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.

~ I think many modern churches feel like they have really arrived at some fine, outstanding, sinlessly perfected sainthood – and I think they believe their own lie in their hearts; but it certainly doesn't make it so – because they're usually the worse spiritual Christians of them all — because they compare themselves by other Christians. Read that again slowly. This is definitely the tragedy of the hour. It's easy to fall asleep in a dark closet and become cold and indifferent and not even be conscience of our own spiritual deadness. Those people who fall asleep always claim to be the most spiritual people around, too; and sometimes they are – but the spirit they call on and serve is not the Holy Spirit and it isn't from above. Maybe you would prefer to just stop reading right here? Don't tell me about being hot for Jesus when you are as cold as a fish, friend....

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.

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:

15 Not boasting of things without 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,

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.

17 But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

18 For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth.

~ Paul didn't come to them as a pastor – Paul came to the church at Corinth as a missionary. Paul would begin a work and move out into the frontier. Paul was doing what he was called to do. To understand our preacher, we must understand what his particular calling is. Perhaps your

pastor is gifted in the pulpit, and he actually teaches the Word of God; well, you better allow him time to prepare his sermons. Maybe you don't have a tremendous preacher, but perhaps he is a great organizer. If you'll find out what his gift is, then you can determine if he is exercising his gift; but don't sit in judgment on him, because we're talking about other people who are joined to the Living Christ in this section of Scripture. It is so vitally important. We ALL need a heavy dose of the cutting Paul is doing here. This really has a striking message for my heart; maybe I am just writing to myself? Either way, this is a heavy-duty message if you can hear the voice of the Lord our God speaking to you now....

XI

¹ Would to God ye could bear with me a little in my folly: and indeed bear with me.

² For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.

³ But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

⁴ For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him.

⁵ For I suppose I was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles.

~ So, our Spiritual Safari ends this leg of our expedition witnessing the tender and sincere love of Christ Paul had for the Corinthian church. Make another note at verse three – “*the simplicity that is in Christ.*” We need less pride, more learning, and more simplicity in teaching regarding getting the entire Word of God out to the entire world. Some people talk for fifteen minutes but have no idea what they're talking about; nor do they know how to express the Lord Jesus Christ to others. The intellectual approach is puerile, kids. Ultimately, you say nothing. What we need to do is take the

entire Word of God to the entire world properly, correctly and completely. The simplicity that is in Christ. Meekness and gentleness – as Paul the apostle. There was a very brilliant man with a radio program, and he taught in the simplest of simple to understand format. Well, he wasn't quite as simple as he came across; in fact, he may have well been the most extraordinaire preacher the world has seen thus far ~

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