

II Corinthians 10-13: Paul Defends His Ministry

1. As a Warrior: Attacking the Opponent 10:1-18 “the weapons of our warfare” 4
 - a. Paul’s opponents questioned the validity of his authority. From 7:8-16 we know that the majority of Corinthian believers sided with Paul. However, a minority continued to slander him saying that he was bold in his letters but had no authority in person, 10. Chapters 10-13 are Paul’s response to this charge. Chapters 1-9 Paul is calm and serene, chapters 10-13 he becomes harsh and polemical. Note the criticism Paul suffered: these charges are degrading:
 - i. Not a polished speaker, 10:10, 11:6
 - ii. Did not charge for his speaking, 11:7-9
 - iii. Not a true apostle like Peter and the others, 11, I Cor. 7:15, II Cor. 12:12
 - iv. He changed his travel plans, 1:17-2:4
 - b. Paul responded to his critics “in the meekness” and gentleness exemplified by Jesus, Mt. 11:28-30, cf. Num. 12:3. Meekness is not a sign of weakness. Paul refused to respond to his critics the way a person of the world would respond, 1-4. Paul was in the world but not of the world, 3. The false teacher lives by the standard of the world and not the Bible, 2.
 - c. Paul’s “weapons” against his enemies were spiritual (prayer, faith, hope, love, God’s Word, etc., Eph. 6:18), not “carnal,” 4. These “weapons” enable the man of God to tear down the “strong holds” (schemes, Eph. 6:11) of Satan, 5-6. “Imaginations” refer to “speculation” or “human arguments against God.” Only God’s word or methods can pull down these barriers.
 - d. These spiritual weapons also enable the child of God to “bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ,” 5, Mt. 15:10-20, Prov. 4:23, 23:7. The heart of the matter has always been a matter of heart.
 - e. “To revenge all disobedience” points to the fact that error will be punished by God and therefore must be confronted, 6.
 - f. Regarding the folly of judging someone solely on his/her outward appearance, see I Sam. 16:7, Jn. 7:24, Rm. 2:28-29.
 - g. Paul possessed Apostolic authority but he used it carefully, 7-8. As a matter of fact, he used it to “edify” the church and not to “destroy” it.
 - h. Paul assures the people that he will be as “bold” and “courageous” in person when he arrives as he is now in his letter, 11, 12:20. Do they really want to see this side of Paul? I Cor. 4:18-20.
 - i. Paul criticized the false teachers on at least two major fronts, 12-18:
 - i. They measured themselves by themselves instead of by an objective standard like the Word, which Paul measured himself by, 12-14. Paul said this practice of the false teachers was not wise, 12.
 - ii. They commended themselves, 12.
 - iii. They “boasted” (bragged) as if Paul’s labor among the Corinthians was their own, 14-18.
 - iv. Paul was honest and refused to take credit for another man’s work, 15-16. He actually commended the work of others in the Lord, I Cor. 3:11-23.

- j. Paul attributed the turmoil in the Corinthian church to the lack of mature faith on the part of the members, 15. "When your faith is increased" indicates faith must continue to grow. When it ceases to grow, problems certainly arise.
 - k. Paul's only boast or brag was in the Lord, 17. What really mattered was commendation of God not man, including these "super apostles," 18.
2. As a Spiritual Father: Protecting the Church 11:1-15 "...for I have espoused (promised) you to one husband" 2
- a. "In my folly" refers to Paul's request for the Corinthians to allow him to speak "like a fool," 1. After all, they had permitted the "super apostles" the same courtesy, 4.
 - b. Verse 2 could be translated thus, "I am anxious that your love should be for Christ alone, just as a pure maiden saves her love for one man only." There is a "godly jealousy," Ex. 20:5, Hosea.
 - c. As Satan "beguiled" Eve in the beginning, so now many in the Corinthian church have been misled by the "subtlety" of these false teachers, 3, Gen. 3:1-12. "Simplicity" denotes the "purity of devotion" necessary to follow Jesus.
 - d. The following objectional doctrines characterized the preaching of these "super apostles," 4: "Another Jesus," "a different Spirit" – not the Holy Spirit, and "a different Gospel," cf. Gal. 1:6-8, different plan of salvation.
 - e. In v. 5, Paul labels these false teachers "false apostles." Really "pseudo apostles" Greek – transform – to disguise, to masquerade.
 - f. Paul's generosity toward the church at Corinth proved the sincerity of his love for them, 7-12. Paul labored as a tentmaker, Ac. 18:1-3. Paul uses irony in v. 8 when he said "he robbed (took from) other churches" (probably Macedonian churches, Phil. 4:20) so he would not have to "rob them." On the other hand, "super apostles" were guilty of peddling the Gospel for personal benefit.
3. As a Fool: Boasting of Suffering 11:16-12:10 "receive me as a fool" 16
- a. Paul presents 3 proofs of the honesty of his love for the church at Corinth:
 - i. His religious jealousy over the church, 1-6.
 - ii. His generosity to the church, 7-12.
 - iii. His anxiety for the church, 16-33. V. 28 is key; they all didn't appreciate his sacrifices for them.
 - b. Before Paul recounted his trials, he felt it necessary to explain why he was "boasting," 16-17.
 - i. Remember that Paul admitted he purposefully spoke as a fool, 1.
 - ii. The immature and unspiritual attitude of some of the Corinthians forced Paul to write about himself, see Pr. 26:5.
 - iii. He had to do it to prove his love for them and to protect them from those who would lead them astray.
 - c. V. 20 – Paul lists the ways these "super apostles" had taken advantage of the church:
 - i. Bondage – taught doctrine of legalism that was contrary to the Gospel
 - ii. Devour – they "ate up" all they could get
 - iii. Take of you – "took the Corinthians in, fooled them"
 - iv. Exalt – exalted themselves
 - v. Smite you – verbally attacked them, "slapped them in the face publicly"

- d. Consider what Paul endured for the cause of Christ and the cause of the Lord's church everywhere, 25-33:
- i. Far more labors – 23 – trips to preach in various provinces
 - ii. Far more imprisonments – 23, Ac. 16:22-30
 - iii. Beaten times without number – 23, Ac. 16:23
 - iv. Often in danger of death – 23, Ac. 14:18
 - v. 5x received 39 stripes – 24 – 40 was the limit, Deut. 25:3
 - vi. 3x beaten with rods – 25, Ac. 16:22 – Roman punishment administered to Paul unknowingly and illegally (Paul was a Roman citizen).
 - vii. Stoned once – 25, Ac. 14:19
 - viii. 3x shipwrecked, day & night in the deep – 25, Ac. 27:4-44 records a 4th endured after writing II Cor.
 - ix. In dangers – 26
 - x. Been in hardship – 27
 - xi. Daily pressure for all the churches – 28
 - xii. When the brethren in these churches were “led into sin” or “weak,” he was so concerned that it was as if he was weak – 29, I Cor. 8:9, 9:22.
 - xiii. An example: 32-33
 1. Took place in Damascus, Syria, about 39AD or just months after his conversion.
 2. Jews (now saw Paul as a traitor) pressed the governor under “Aretas the king” (he served as king of the Nabatean Arabs from 9BC to 39AD) to kill Paul, Ac. 9:23-26.
 3. The governor was guarding the city gates in order to capture Paul.
 4. Damascus was a walled city, probably containing 6-10 gates (Edwards)
 5. Christians befriended Paul and saved his life when they “let him down in a basket” through a window in their home located in the wall of the city.
 6. Paul was made to feel “weak” and in danger.
- e. In Ch. 12, Paul continues “boasting” because it is necessary; he feels “compelled” to do so, 12:1.
- f. Paul now speaks of his “visions” (a specific type of revelation), 1. Revelation – “revealing, uncovering” of knowledge previously unknown but revealed through God's power, Ac. 9:19, 18:9, 23:11, 27:23 are revelations to Paul.
- i. “I knew a man” is a reference to himself, 2, Jn. 21:20. One more indication of his humility. “In Christ” is a reference to being a Christian, Rm. 6:3-7.
 - ii. “14 years ago” – 14 years ago he had this vision probably at Troas, Ac. 11:25
 - iii. The experience was so moving that Paul was not sure if he was “in the spirit” or “in the body.” Paul implies that either is possible. “This means the real person can exist outside the body which contradicts the Jehovah Witness' theory that says the total person is made up of only body and breath (they endeavor to prove this from Gen. 2:7). Was it just Paul's breath that was called up? Obviously, that is not the case.” (Edwards)

- iv. Paul says he was “caught up into the third heaven,” 4. Jews taught 3 heavens: first – where birds fly; second – where stars are; third – where God dwells. The purpose of this visit was probably to strengthen and encourage Paul.
 - v. Paul could have “boasted” in this vision and others. But, he chose to “boast” about his weakness – the negative side – his thorn in the flesh, 5-7. Reason for the thorn: “to keep him from exalting himself.” Satan seeks to use this opportunity to cause Paul great discomfort (remember Job). However, God will use it for a positive purpose.
 - vi. What was the thorn? Many possibilities: epilepsy, malaria, attacks of depression, the suffering of constant persecutions, the agony caused by his memory of how he once persecuted the church, etc. poor eyesight may be the best and most logical answer, Ac. 22:11, 9:18, Gal. 4:13-15, 6:11. This may explain why Paul employed an amanuensis to write his letters.
 - vii. God reminded Paul that his strength is “perfected” by his “weakness,” 9. Remember Moses, Job, Gideon, etc. therefore Paul boasted in his weakness because then the power of Christ worked through him. Paul made his adversity stepping stones to success in Christ.
4. As an Apostle: Exercising Loving Authority 12:11-13:10 “for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles” 12:11
- a. Paul should have been commended by the Corinthians because he was indeed an apostle, 11, Ac. 2:22, Heb. 2:1-4.
 - b. God’s “signs, wonders, and mighty deeds” worked through him proved Paul’s apostleship, 12.
 - c. Paul had cost the church nothing financially, 3.
 - d. In spite of the difficulties in Corinth, Paul had been faithful to visit them; now he was about to make his 3rd visit, 14, 13:1, Ac. 18:1, II Cor. 2:1-4. Paul continued not “to be a burden” to them financially. Paul was their parent – father, I Cor. 4:15-21 – spiritually speaking they were his children.
 - e. Paul’s deep love for the Corinthians is evident in his promise that “he would most gladly spend” and “be expended” to save their souls, 15.
 - f. The “super apostles” accused Paul of being “crafty” (deceptive) with his financial policy and his associates, 16. Paul affirms that none of them took advantage of the Corinthians, 17-18. Important to practice what they preach.
 - g. Calling God and Jesus at witnesses, Paul declared that he had boasted in these last few verses not to “defend” himself but to “edify” the Corinthians, 19. Note: dearly beloved.
 - h. Paul addressed his fear that when he visited for the 3rd time he would be made “sorrowful” again like his last visit, 20-21, 2:1. “Such as I would” indicates the repentance Paul hoped to find in the Corinthians. Debates – quarreling, envying – jealousy, strifes – factions, whisperings – gossip, swellings – arrogance, tumults – disorder, lasciviousness – unbridled lust – are all works of the flesh, Gal. 5:19-21. Unless they listened to Paul’s words and repent, Paul would be “humbled” – ashamed – and would be forced to be stern – “bewail” – with the impenitent Christians.
 - i. Paul began Ch. 13 by continuing warning of the “super apostles” and all those who followed them by saying that “every word” would be established by 2 or 3 witnesses,

- Deut. 19:15, Mt. 18:15-16. Paul warned that this visit will be like the “second time” if they refused to repent, 2.
- j. Nevertheless, if the Corinthians needed further proof of “Christ speaking in Paul,” when he arrived he would “powerfully” remove all doubt. He would be “mighty” in the “power of God” when he came the 3rd time, 3. The example used to illustrate this point is Jesus Christ, 4. The world said the cross revealed Jesus’ weaknesses, I Cor. 1:23; on the other hand, His resurrection should clearly demonstrate the power of God. The same power worked through Paul.
 - k. Paul demanded that the erring Corinthians “examine themselves,” 5-6. How? Through the Word, I Jn. 4:1. For what purposes?
 - i. To determine if they are in the faith – or – to see if Jesus Christ is on you.
 - ii. To prove they are not reprobates (counterfeit, hypocrites, literally “those who have failed the test of faithfulness).
 - iii. To come to realize the Paul and his co-workers are not reprobates.
 - l. Paul prayed for 3 things as he began to close II Cor., 7-9.
 - i. That erring Christians would do what is right – repent.
 - ii. They might be “perfect” (complete, whole, mature, etc. spiritually), Wish – KJV – Pray, 9.
 - m. Paul culminates his warning began at 13:1 by reminding his erring brethren that he possessed from God the necessary “authority” to discipline them, 10. He did not want to use it.
5. Final Remarks 13:11-14
- a. Paul concluded his letter with a series of admonitions for his brethren, 11.
 - i. Farewell – probably better translated “rejoice.”
 - ii. Be perfect – to be made complete by the Word.
 - iii. Be of good comfort – be comforted, 1:3-4.
 - iv. Be of one mind – be like-minded, I Cor. 1:10.
 - v. Live in peace, Mt. 5:9, Heb. 12:14. Reward: the “God of love and peace” will be with you, Rm. 15:33, Phil. 4:9.
 - b. Holy kiss greeting once more promoted by Paul as hopefully an encouragement to the congregation – including the erring ones – to do what is right, 13.
 - c. Paul again refers to the Christians as saints, 13. Here Christians in Macedonia, probably Philippi, where Paul wrote II Cor.
 - d. Paul closes his great polemical letter by recalling the Trinity & 3 wishes for his brethren, 14.
 - i. Grace of the Lord Jesus
 - ii. Love (agape) of God (Father)
 - iii. Communion (fellowship) of the Holy Spirit
 - e. “Did the minority ever repent and reunite with the majority and repair its relationship with Paul? We don’t know for sure but possibly it did. At least about three years later (in 58 AD) when Paul wrote Romans from Corinth he says nothing of the difficulties there. This is not a certain conclusion but seems to carry some weight. However, about four decades later (in 95 AD) the uninspired letter called I Clement indicated the Corinthian

church was in great turmoil again. In fact, the congregation had deposed its leaders.
(Edwards)

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