

Introduction

This begins the third and final major section of this epistle. There were false teachers who had attacked Paul's character, his mission and his teachings. They had even challenged his authority in questioning the validity of his apostleship.

In these last four chapters we will see Paul address this head on. We saw how he introduced the problem in chapter one. He then proceeded to explain what his ministry was and then challenged them to follow his example in giving and living for others.

Now we see that he declares spiritual war with these false teachers (Judaizers). Paul is not defending himself here, but rather he is defending his God-given ministry and authority!

Chapter 10 can be divided into three parts:

1. **Paul Declared Spiritual Warfare! (2 Corinthians 10:1-6)**

We'll see as Paul gives his final appeal to the Church for reconciliation. We'll see him state in these verses that he doesn't desire to "*show boldness*" in punishing the disobedient ones when he arrives, but that he is ready to do so if necessary! (2 Corinthians 10:2, 6).

2. **Paul Claimed Spiritual Authority! (2 Corinthians 10:7-11)**

We'll see Paul reaffirm the validity of his calling and authority as an Apostle of Jesus Christ! And we'll see how he will point to his conduct before them! A sort of "*proof in the pudding!*" moment!

3. **Paul Set Spiritual Standards! (2 Corinthians 10:12-18)**

We'll see how he presents a plan to judge true and false ministries as well as deal with the issue of how to measure the Church of God and how can we know when a ministry is of God or when it is of man?

SO, LET'S BEGIN TONIGHT:

I. **PAUL DECLARED SPIRITUAL WARFARE! (2 Corinthians 10:1-6)**

As believers, we know both from Scripture and from experience that **much of the Christian life is a struggle!**

Our Salvation is a victory that was won for us on the cross of Calvary! Praise God for that! Based on the truth of Scripture we know that the eternal destiny of the believer can never be in doubt!

I both preach and believe in the eternal security of the believer in Christ because of what is taught so clearly in the pages of Scripture!

Romans 8:35 asks the question, "*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?*" Then it speaks of the daily conflict that can come to us while living the Christian life as it continues to ask, "*shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? {36} As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.*"

Then it declares in Romans 8:37-39, "*Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, {39} Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*"

Though our salvation is secure, our daily walk with Christ is often a battle though isn't it? In fact, we know from the Gospels how Jesus spent much time preparing his followers for the conflict. *Matthew 5:10-12—"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. {11} Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. {12} Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."*

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When Jesus sent them out to serve He spoke about the struggles they would face.

Matthew 10:16—"Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves."

Matthew 10:22—"And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved."

John 15:19—"If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."

John 16:33—"These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

Many spiritually young believers stumble when they begin to face spiritual battles. Most of us expect and can relate to persecution or opposition that comes from outside the Church.

Unbelievers are not expected to understand, support, or agree with us:
1 Corinthians 2:14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

But some of the most dangerous conflicts in the believer's life, can be those that come from fellow believers! These battles that come from folks that should be our allies not our enemies can knock us for a loop!

It was not primarily the Roman authorities that Paul spent so much time fighting! Many times it was so-called believers! Folks who claimed to be saved but who had perverted the Gospel and who were leading others astray!

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Galatians 1:6-7 6 "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: 7 Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ."

Galatians 3:1 "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?"

We know that people can be cruel. We know that words can inflict pain. The words that hurt the most are those from people who should be standing at our side.

Over the years I have both heard of and witnessed pastors and their families hurt...some seemingly beyond recovery...just by careless words.

Sometimes I've seen children of ministers reject Church work and become rebellious because of the way their families have been treated by congregations.

Sometimes it seems the battles are greater than families can endure. While the wounds that come from serving Christ are never excuses for moral or spiritual failure, they can help explain the question, "Why?"

It is unfortunate, but sometimes the greatest pain of the ministry can come from the very people you have loved and helped the most.

No one should have questioned Paul's love for the Corinthian believers, yet that is exactly what the false teachers were leading Paul's own converts to do.

People can be fickle. We know that some of the crowd that laid palm branches before Jesus and cried, "*Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord*", were some of the same in

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John 12:13, that shouted, "Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas:" ... and then, "Crucify him, crucify him" in Luke 23:18-21.

Let's look at what Paul says in these verses here in 2 Corinthians:

Vs. 1a

Even though Paul was at war, we see that he was determined to maintain a Christ like spirit! This is important!

In every Church there seems to be those who believe that to *contend for the faith* requires them to become contentious. It is as if they think that they have been given the "spiritual gift of opposition" (even though that is not a real spiritual gift!) Nevertheless, these seem to oppose whatever is being done or planned, thereby disrupting unity!

Even some in places of leadership can become overbearing and attempt to lord over God's Church.

1 Peter 5:2-3—"Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; {3} Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock."

Vs. 1b-2

In so many words, Paul is saying, "I warn you, I wish to maintain the right spirit but do not mistake that for weakness or fear on my part. If I must become stern I can, and will do so, when I arrive."

Vs. 3-4

We need to remember that our battle as believers is a spiritual battle! And spiritual battles are not won with fleshly means!

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."

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1 Timothy 1:18—"This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare;"

2 Timothy 2:3-5—"Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. {4} No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier. {5} And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully."

vs. 5

Imaginations is translated from the Greek word *that deals with reasonings or opinions*. It literally means "what you are thinking."

The weapons of our defense are not our own thoughts. It is not, "the way I figure it." The Greek philosophers that had influenced the Corinthians so much valued *their ability to reason*. They prided themselves in *personal understandings*.

In the same way, remember how Paul warned the Colossian believers in Colossians 2:8 when he wrote to them these words: "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ."

"every high thing" This is probably a reference to the "high thinking" of the Greek philosophers like Plato, Aristotle and the Stoics. The lost world and the carnal believer always seem enchanted with worldly knowledge and reasoning!

But we aren't to be enchanted by it at all! Because nothing rates higher than the knowledge of God and being obedient to Christ!

That's a good place to leave off tonight. We'll come back and look at how Paul claimed Spiritual Authority and then we'll also see how he set Spiritual Standards.

I. PAUL DECLARED SPIRITUAL WARFARE!
II. PAUL CLAIMED SPIRITUAL AUTHORITY!
(2 Corinthians 10:7-11)

Vs. 7-9

One of the most important lessons a young believer needs to learn is that **appearances can be deceptive! Just because someone has a title or claims to be an authority does not make them spiritual!**

Often, even in our own Independent Fundamental Baptist movement we often are prone to confuse success with numbers, as proof of the blessings of God.

Just because someone appears to have a large following or appears to be having a large number of decisions does not prove their success is from God!

Position and power is no guarantee of God's authority! The Corinthian believers had been impressed by the appearances and presentations of the Judaizers! Paul on the other hand had not always left a good first impression!

Vs. 10

Adam Clarke's Commentary provides us with this ancient description of Paul by a writer named Nicephorus,

" Paul was a little man, crooked, and almost bent like a bow, with a pale countenance, long and wrinkled; a bald head; his eyes full of fire and benevolence; his beard long, thick, and interspersed with gray hairs, as was his head"

Adam Clarke then quotes Calmet, a writer from the time of Chrysostom, concerning Paul:

"Paul was a man of about three cubits in height, (four feet six), and yet nevertheless, touched the heavens" and he said he had *"a large nose."*

Vs. 11

The ability to minister with Godly authority is an evidence of spiritual maturity. Authority often exposes maturity. That is one of the reasons that a novice should not be ordained.

1 Timothy 3:6—"Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil."

We shouldn't place new members or new believers into places of authority until they have first been proved.

1 Timothy 3:10—"And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless."

Authority must be earned. The right to lead is a gift from those who have learned to trust. A mature leader will never **demand** respect. A Godly leader **commands** respect. An immature leader will allow their authority to go to their head. They will constantly need to remind those around them of their authority. A person with the wrong view of authority says, "do." The person with the right view of authority says, "follow."

PAUL DECLARED SPIRITUAL WARFARE...

PAUL CLAIMED SPIRITUAL AUTHORITY...

III. PAUL SET SPIRITUAL STANDARDS! (2 Corinthians 10:12-18)

Paul set forth a plan on how to measure the Church of God. Too many folks measure or judge a Church by false measurements. A Church should not be measured by the same standards which we use to measure things or organizations of the world!

Vs. 12

Paul first tells us here how NOT to measure! The measurement of the Church should not be based on the success or lack thereof, as compared with other Churches!

Religion has always been external based. Religion judges a man on outward appearances. The Judaizers, like the Pharisees, were legalists.

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They developed a formula which was intended to produce spiritual living. They failed to understand that **separation** and **service is the fruit of spirituality not the means of it!**

The Judaizers patted one another on the back and bragged on how spiritual each other was because they were living up to a man-made set of standards! They rejected anyone who failed to live by their rules!

Jesus had some choice comments about the Pharisees who were that way in Matthew 23:24-28 He said, *"Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel. {25} Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. {26} Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also. {27} Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. {28} Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity."*

Situation ethics is large and growing larger in the world in which we live! Situation ethics declares, *"the end justifies the means."*

Unfortunately this same, worldly mindset has permeated many Churches today! Some practice and teach that to reach the greatest numbers, we must water down, compromise, and redefine the truth.

They will use such phrases as, *"What is more important, getting people to read the Bible or insuring the Bible is word for word perfect?"*

They will declare, *"It makes no difference how correct your doctrine is, if there is no one at the church to hear it."*

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Sometimes you'll hear something similar to this:

"You must use the world's bait if you are going to reach the world's rats."

Or maybe something like this:

"Numbers prove our methods work and old fashion methods don't."

"God would not be blessing us with such large numbers if we were doing things wrong."

"You can't do a good thing, the wrong way."

All of these quotes are used on a regular basis to justify the actions of Churches and Christians who have compromised and sold out to the false unbiblical truth of situation ethics.

So, WHAT ARE THE TRUE MEASUREMENTS?

1. Vs. 13-14

Am I serving where God wants me to serve? God places different people in different locations to serve Him. Not every ministry is going to be a visible ministry. Not every ministry is going to be successful in numbers or outward results. God determines the field. The ministry is not a contest.

2. Vs. 15-17

Am I glorifying Christ with my ministry? We need to stop and ask ourselves every now and then, *"Who am I trying to impress with my ministry?" "Who am I trying to please with my ministry?" "Does it bother me when others receive the credit for my ministry?"*

3. Vs. 18

Am I going to receive His commendation when I am through? It really does not matter what people think of our ministry. What really matters is what does God think.