

## 2 Corinthians 10:7-18

### Introduction

Paul had made an impassioned plea to the members of the church in Corinth to assess the controversy between him and his detractors (**2 Cor 10:1-6**).

The time had now come to decide where their loyalties lay. Would they side with Paul, the man who by God's grace, had founded the church, or would they listen to a group of men who had infiltrated the church and worked hard to ruin Paul's reputation and ministry? Certainly they could not take both sides.

They would have to decide where and with whom they stood.

### Summary

**In 2 Corinthians 10:7-18, the believers in Corinth face a dilemma and have to decide where their loyalties lie, either with Paul or with his detractors.**

#### 1. Answered Critics vv 7-11

The case against Paul had two main elements.

The first is seen from Paul says in **vs. 7**. The apostle states that he and his associates are as much 'Christ's' as anyone else.

His opponents seemingly alleged that they belonged to Christ in a way that he did not. It was a subtle attempt to undermine Paul, hinting that they were the genuine article, whereas Paul was a poor substitute for the real thing.

Paul did not respond in kind, boosting himself at the expense of his detractors. His answer was modest and restrained: 'just as he is Christ's, so also are we' (**2 Cor 10:7**).

The second charge was that Paul was inconsistent. Whilst his letters were 'weighty and strong' (**2 Cor 10:9-10**) and, undoubtedly, he was a great wordsmith, nevertheless, face to face he was somewhat of a disappointment.

When Paul came to Corinth, he deliberately adopted a self-effacing manner in his preaching of the Gospel (**1 Cor. 2:1-5**).

The gospel is more important than the preacher. Just because certain methods work when it comes to persuading people to buy products and services, we have no right to assume that the gospel can be presented in the same way.

Paul had set out to be conciliatory, but this did not mean that he could not, if the situation demanded it, face down his critics. He nevertheless explains that his authority, which had been given to him by the Lord, was not given so that he could

project a powerful persons, but to edify others, to build and strengthen churches, rather than destroy them (**2 Cor 10:8**).

## 2. True Evaluation vv. 12-18

To assess a man's ministry, some standard of comparison is necessary. Here, Paul's detractors went badly wrong; they are 'without understanding'; 'they measure themselves by one another and compare themselves with one another' (**10:12**) as though they occupied different places in the league table of spiritual excellence. Import this kind of mentality into the church and you get the big-name syndrome rather than humility, suffering and Christlikeness in God's under-shepherds. The last thing Paul wanted to do was get into a competition for who had top place in the hierarchy (**2 Cor 10:13-15**).

Paul had arrived at Corinth first, ahead of anyone else. He had come with the gospel, and those who followed had fastened onto the church like parasites, moving in on an established church and milking it for their own dubious ends, whether for money or for a position of power over people's lives.

Paul was hoping that the situation in Corinth would stabilize sufficiently to allow him to move on and preach the Gospel and church plant in a part of the world where the name of Jesus was unknown (**2 Cor 10:15-16** cf **Rom. 15:28**).

It was not Paul's way to turn up on the scene after all the hard work had been done and feed off 'the labors of others (**10:15**), 'boasting of work already done in another's area of influence (**10:16**). Paul quotes from the prophecy of Jeremiah, who explains what really matters (**Jer. 9:23-24**).

People who know the secret of spiritual success do not glory in their own abilities or possessions. Human abilities and possessions are as nothing compared with knowing and understanding God.

## 3. Divine Approval vs. 18

Paul issues a sobering reminder that what matters most (**2 Cor 10:18**). It is not whether the spiritual leader can commend himself or for that matter, outshine his peers, but whether or not 'the Lord commends' him.

Does he earn the approval of his Master?

There is a powerful challenge here for all those involved in spiritual leadership.

All sorts of things compete for the attention of pastors and elders and we are continually faced with the need to assign priorities. What must come first?

Paul's answer is that pleasing God and earning his approval must be our highest goal.