



SECOND CORINTHIANS

The Comfort of God FOR and THROUGH His People



Part 32—“The Weapons of Our Warfare”— 30 June 2024

Introduction

Although Paul at times addresses the implied arguments of his opponents in Corinth in the first nine chapters of 2 Corinthians, his overall tone is one of joy and thankfulness. Paul and his co-workers have been comforted by God and are encouraged by news they have heard from Corinth. Turning to conclude the letter, however, Paul changes his tone and directly addresses those he considers a threat to the Corinthian church while giving a detailed defense of his ministry as an apostle of Jesus Christ.

Main Point: To live as God’s servants in the world is to be engaged in conflict. We do so, however, following in the _____ of Messiah and with the powerful _____ that He provides.

Introductory Considerations

I. The change in the _____ of the letter in chapters 10-13.

⇒ Paul’s tone in 1-9 that of a man who recognizes the challenges of the situation in Corinth but one who is anticipating a positive outcome. It seems likely that, having completed 1-9, there was some kind of delay in Paul sending the letter and during which time he received more news from Corinth. The tone of 10-13 is therefore one of _____ and rebuke.

“Paul was at the time [when the letter was being written]...extraordinarily pressed by his ministry in Macedonia...Perhaps completion of the letter was repeatedly delayed, for weeks or even longer...In short, after finishing the first nine chapters, but before actually terminating the letter and sending it off, Paul receives additional bad news, and therefore adds four more chapters of rebuke. 2 Corinthians is thus a formally unified letter, but does reflect a substantial change of perspective in the last four chapters.”—D.A. Carson

2. The identity & characteristics of Paul’s _____ in Corinth.

The focus of Paul’s ire in 10-13 is those in Corinth who are a dangerous influence on the believers there and who he variously refers to as ‘super-apostles,’ ‘false apostles,’ and ‘servants of Satan.’ While they are not specifically identified in these chapters, the issues Paul addresses reveal certain things about them:

(1) *They proclaimed some kind of Judaized form of Christianity.*

“...Judaizing was not a coherent system of thought, but a common attempt to impose Jewish practices and all or part of the Mosaic law upon Gentiles as conditions for salvation or at least for Christian maturity.” —D.A. Carson

(2) *They were heavily influenced by Hellenistic culture.*

“Paul’s opponents were apparently swayed by sophists who were prominent throughout Greece...[these opponents] not only adopted the Hellenistic standards of rhetoric best exemplified by the sophists, but went further: they also took over the sophists’ penchant for self-commendation and their insistence on payment. Sophists delighted to parade their accomplishments and display their oratory.”
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(3) *They emphasized the importance of ecstatic spiritual visions and experiences.*

“...they minister as dynamic spiritual leaders whose spiritual experiences attest their superiority, and whose rhetoric demonstrates their God-given graces.”
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Key Point: Paul’s opponents were characterized by _____ and _____ which revealed that they were not actually servants of Christ but _____ teachers.

“...the intruders were preaching another Jesus than the one Paul preached, a different spirit and a different gospel from the one the Corinthians had received.” —D.A. Carson

2 Corinthians 10:1-6

Exposition

I. Paul exhorts the Corinthians to differentiate themselves from the false teachers in their midst.

“I entreat you” → “I beg of you”

⇒ His exhortation is given in same manner in which _____ conducted Himself during His earthly ministry.

“meekness”—πραΰτης (prautēs)— the quality of not being overly impressed by a sense of one’s self-importance.

“gentleness”—ἐπιείκεια (epieikeia)—the quality of making allowances despite facts that might suggest reason for a different reaction.

⇒ He has to directly _____ the false teachers and wishes to avoid having to enact discipline on them as well.

“boldness with such confidence as I count on showing”

"being ready to punish every disobedience"

- * He anticipates the proper response of the Corinthians and will need their help to make sure that the false teachers are rightly handled and _____ from the fellowship.

Key Point: There is no contradiction between _____ and a willingness to confront sin _____.

"Meekness is a virtue that moderates anger according to right reason. It is related to clemency, which moderates the external punishment or vengeance which a person inflicts through anger." —Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*

2. Paul addresses some of the criticisms that the false teachers have made against him.

- ⇒ They have criticized him for how he _____ himself in person as opposed to how he does in writing.
"humble...face to face" *"bold...when I am away"*
- ⇒ They have accused him of conducting his ministry in a _____ manner that lacks God's blessing and His spiritual power.
"walking according to the flesh"

Key Point: Those who do not assert themselves in the manner of the world, are often viewed as weak and lacking God's _____.

3. Having been accused of weakness, Paul employs military language to describe his ministry.

- ⇒ Although they live and minister in the world, they do not 'wage war' as the world does.

"To ['walk in the flesh'] means to participate in normal human existence with all its limitations. 'To wage war [according to the flesh]' here means to carry out ministry with mere human resources, and with the...tendency to employ doubtful means..."—Colin Kruse

- ⇒ Their 'weapons' are not of this world, but have _____ power because they are from God for the purpose of 'destroying strongholds.'
- ⇒ The 'strongholds' they destroy with their divinely powerful weapons are the sinful _____ and _____ which are contrary to God's truth.
"arguments" *"lofty opinion"*

"...his weapons destroy the way people think, demolish their sinful thought patterns, the mental structures by which they live their lives in rebellion against God."
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- ⇒ Their goal is that all would be brought to faith and would have their hearts and minds made _____ to Christ.
"every thought captive to obey Christ"

Paul's opponents accuse him of being 'fleshly' because he does not possess the powers of rhetoric, command speaking fees, or brag of his spiritual visions and his Jewish heritage. Paul's meekness and simple presentation of God's truth are the truly divine means of 'warfare' while their gimmicks and their boasting are the actual evidence of 'walking according to the flesh.'

Key Point: Worldly means, though they might seem _____ for a time, do not have the power to obtain true victory in a battle that is ultimately _____.

Concluding Thought

- Our _____ serve to form and shape our _____ which ultimately justify our _____.
"thoughts"—νόημα (noēma)—that which one has in mind as product of intellectual process; a design, scheme, or intention

2 Cor. 11:3—But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.



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- * He anticipates the proper response of the Corinthians and will need their help to make sure that the false teachers are rightly handled and **removed** from the fellowship.

Key Point: There is no contradiction between **meekness** and a willingness to confront sin **directly**.

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