

Lesson Ten

(10:1-18)

SECTION XVI 10:1-18

10 I, Paul, myself entreat you, by the meekness and gentleness of Christ—I who am humble when face to face with you, but bold to you when I am away! — 2 I beg of you that when I am present I may not have to show boldness with such confidence as I count on showing against some who suspect us of acting in worldly fashion. 3 For though we live in the world we are not carrying on a worldly war, 4 for the weapons of our warfare are not worldly but have divine power to destroy strongholds. 5 We destroy arguments and every proud obstacle to the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, 6 being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete.

7 Look at what is before your eyes. If any one is confident that he is Christ's let him remind himself that as he is Christ's, so are we. 8 For even if I boast a little too much of our authority, which the Lord gave for building you up and not for destroying you,

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I shall not be put to shame. 9 I would not seem to be frightening you with letters. 10 For they say, "His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech of no account." 11 Let such people understand that what we say by letter when absent, we do when present. 12 Not that we venture to class or compare ourselves with some of those who commend themselves. But when they measure themselves by one another, and compare themselves with one another, they are without understanding.

13 But we will not boast beyond limit, but will keep to the limits God has apportioned us, to reach even to you. 14 For we are not overextending ourselves, as though we did not reach you; we were the first to come all the way to you with the gospel of Christ. 15 We do not boast beyond limit, in other men's labors; but our hope is that as your faith increases, our field among you may be greatly enlarged, 16 so that we may preach the gospel in lands beyond you, without boasting of work already done in another's field. 17 "Let him who boasts, boast of the Lord." 18 For it is not the man who commends himself that is accepted, but the man whom the Lord commends.

As we begin the study of chapters 10-13, it will be well to state that the discussion is rather specifically in defense of Paul's apostleship and the authority thereof. However, that was the underlying current of thought in chapters 1-6, with chapter 7 breaking off into the discussion arising about Titus, which led into the subject of the special offering, in which Titus was involved (hence, chapters 8-9 are parenthetical to the epistle as a whole, which is basically concerned with Paul and his position as an apostle). This section intensifies the discussion, and develops it more directly and specifically.

These four chapters are not easier to understand than chapters 1-7. It is often difficult to decide if Paul is quoting someone, using irony, being defensive or what. If we keep in mind what seems to be the main issue, and attempt to interpret in that light, we will do better. There are many worthwhile lessons for us in these remaining texts.

Chapter 10 begins with a "readout" on any whose lives reflect a lack of submission to Christ, and who thus have standards of thinking centered not in Christ but in themselves (a most unstable point of reference!). This type of thought process does not have every thought captive to Christ, v. 5, and thus sets up humanly-contrived standards, v. 12. This leads to undue evaluations, and results in rejection by Christ rather than his commendation, v. 18. The procedure that is better is to make Christ the point of reckoning, submitting wholly to

his Lordship, considering one's own place in the Lord's will and how perfectly that place has been kept, receiving in return the Lord's "well done." The application that Paul wishes made is for the Corinthians to know who they are (Jesus' disciples), who he is (Jesus authoritative representative to them) and what they should do in consideration of those facts. Thus, the chapter rather neatly describes what should be the "transformed mind" and the results of it in practical ways.

V. 1 — **meekness** — See Matthew 5:5, 11:29, 21:5 (Zechariah 9:9). The term is akin to self-control in its broader sense. Jesus was always self-controlled, though various facets of his personality can be seen, as the preceding reference and the Gospels indicate.

gentleness — Paul urged Felix to be this way, Acts 24:4. It conveys the idea of being reasonable and that nicely so. See then Philippians 4:5. Neither term precludes the thought that other "sides" of one's character may be seen and/or exhibited.

I who . . . away — This is probably best taken to be what some people had said of him, namely, that in person he was anything but what he was by letter; hence, very inconsistent in character. Of course, it is easier to write "strong things" than to say them face to face. However, that, if done, does not mean one is incapable of saying strong things to someone.

V. 2 — Perhaps the problem is that his endeavor to be gentle had been taken, rightly or wrongly, as weakness. So he beseeched those who would read the letter not to make him exhibit what would be described as boldness (i.e., something else other than "meekness"). See I Corinthians 4:18-21. The fact may be that Paul did not know the "some" by face or even by name; he just knew of the opposition.

worldly fashion — This concept is treated in the following verses. He had already denied the charge (as in 2:16-17) by word and by example (7:2-5).

V. 3 — One can be "in the flesh" but not "fleshly-minded" (carnal), since "flesh" can be used various ways. Cf. Romans 8:9 and Galatians 2:20 where the Greek construction (*ἐνσαρکی*) is the same.

V. 4 — **warfare** — That a battle was in progress was not denied, but the nature of the conflict was in respect to authority, and on a spiritual plane, since the authority in question was that of Christ and his apostle. Hence, the issue was moral in nature, revolving around obedience and submission, etc.

divine power — This probably represents the antithesis of the idea in v. 3-4 of "worldly power." See here I Corinthians 2:3-5.

to destroy — The Greek term is *καθαίρειω*, which was regularly used in just such contexts, but in a material sense.

strongholds — Defined in v. 5. The Greek term meant forts, etc.,

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and was used in Proverbs 21:22.

V. 5 — **arguments** — Men's reasoning, thought, what is held as true.

proud obstacle — What is exalted, held up; hence considered of prime importance. It is probably "men's reasonings" which is akin to the idea in Romans 1:18-23. (So the play hasn't changed over the years though the players are different: human wisdom versus divine revelation.)

knowledge of God — Perhaps the idea here is similar to that in Romans 1:18, where truth (what can be known about God, v. 19) was suppressed and/or rejected.

every thought captive — no part of man can be autonomous and yet be pleasing to God. Only complete submission of the total mind will do. Needless to say, here is the most important, yea, the only real battleground: the mind of man. All else is unimportant and trivial in comparison. So Paul's "battle plan" was to capture every thought of every mind, making them subject to the Lord Jesus.

to obey — Paul speaks of the "obedience of faith" in Romans 1:5, 16:26. The issue at hand is not primarily obedience to Paul but rather obedience to Christ. The result of submission to Christ is freedom in every area of life even though we are captives, since truth brings freedom.

V. 6 — The issue is made clear: if Paul goes to Corinth, things will get straightened out. This is made crystal clear in chapter 12:19—13:10.

disobedience — A refusal to "hear" what was commanded. Ref. Matthew 18:17 and Hebrews 2:2 for this word. The play on words in Greek (*παρακοή* vs. *ὑποκοή*) is hard to reproduce in English.

V. 7 — Perhaps this verse is best understood to mean that they needed to see something besides outward appearances, "fleshly" in nature, v. 3-4, and along the lines of what those opposing Paul were doing, vs. 10-12. Instead, they needed divine standards.

we are (Christ's) — The aim is to make Paul's apostleship clearly seen. Because this is true, he has authority, v. 8. It is hardly possible that the issue is just whether Paul be Christian or not. It is rather that he is Christ's representative.

V. 8 — This verse, like most of chapters 11, 12, indicates that Paul had been forced to argue for his position as an apostle, much to his personal dislike. He did make it plain that his authority was to build up rather than tear down (which was the intent and/or end result of what his opponents were doing). He repeats this same sentiment in 13:10. (Gal. 5:2-12 is somewhat like this too.)

V. 9 — This verse is a problem, but seems best taken in connection with the idea that his whole life (letters included) was directed at

upbuilding, and this letter, then, is also for that purpose, and not to undo, tear up. This leads into v. 10.

V. 10 — **letters** — Those opposing Paul were evidently trying to show that what he wrote was bad, not good, and thus similar to his personal presence, which was also of negligible worth. His letters were “heavy” but he was a “flyweight.” It is worthwhile to notice that in Acts 14, he was thought by some to be a god in human form.

weak — See comments on 11:29.

V. 11 — Now hear this!

V. 12 — All along Paul has tried not to commend self, and rather would commend others, or even use one group as a commendation for another group, or use a group to be his commendation. The thing that he always did, however, was recognize that he was an apostle, and reckon/consider how he related to that obligation. Hence, he did not use any other standard of comparison except that divinely given. Clearly, some were guilty of doing otherwise, and he wrote that such practice was not wise. This was not necessarily to exclude comparison of people, or comments on what they were, but such was always to be done from the Lord’s standard. Many Scriptures have contrasts and comparisons of people by people or by God, in both Old and New Testaments. Jesus compared people with people, and so did Paul, but all was done with “God’s yardstick” as the sole criterion of measure. Note then the following verses 14-18 as an example of how one is to do comparison, and with what “yardstick.” (See also Romans 15:16ff. for a parallel text.) The transformed mind of the Christian will not utilize worldly standards if, indeed, it is transformed. The problem is that all too often churches and Christians do use appearances rather than divine criteria.

V. 13 — Note the New International Version on vs. 13-15, especially the marginal reading.

This is an example of how “measurement” should be done: directly related to one’s individual obligation to Christ. It is evidence that one has brought every thought into captivity to Christ, v. 5, and thus can be commended by him, v. 18.

V. 14 — The “measure” given to Paul was the Gentile community at large, and included Corinth. Hence, he was not amiss in judging that they were part of his stewardship responsibility. This was pressure from Paul, in that he was challenging the use of words rather than realities.

V. 15 — It was not wrong to “measure oneself” per se, but it was wrong not to measure oneself by what God expected of self, which was the condemnation in v. 12.

V. 16 — If they would “judge righteous judgment” (John 7:24) in

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regard to him and themselves, thus accepting him as they ought, the effect would be that they could be part of the means to help him to do what God wanted him to do: evangelize other Gentile areas.

V. 17 — He had written this in I Corinthians 1:30, 31, and used this principle as the "absolute" to which all was reckoned. It is somewhat like Proverbs 27:2; Jeremiah 9:23, 24. Check Romans 2:25-29; I Corinthians 4:5.

V. 18 — Self-praise is always suspect, and often hollow. It is quite worthless if God doesn't give his approval. If God does approve, one's own praise is quite needless. If God then "checks out" a person (the Greek term means "to test" and then "to approve"—see I Corinthians 9:27; II Corinthians 13:5, and comments on 3:9), then what others say is only relative. Note here Romans 14:1-12.

QUESTIONS:

79. Did Paul want to be "hard" on the Corinthians when he arrived there?
80. What goal did Paul have for the thoughts of a person?
81. If standards other than those of the Lord are used, what is true?
82. For what purpose did Paul have authority?
83. What standard of measure did Paul use?
84. Is there any real worth in self-commendation apart from God's commendation?