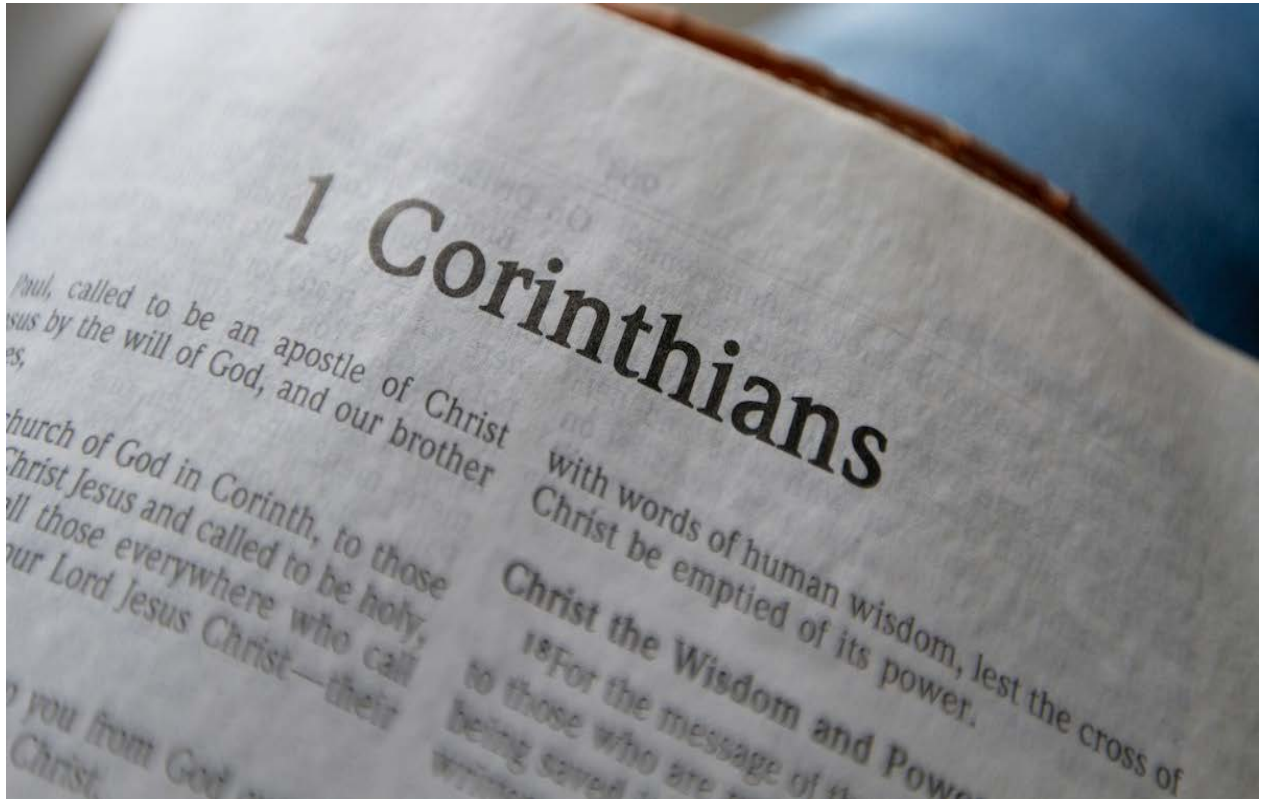


The Christian's Warfare

2 Corinthians 10

1 and 2 Corinthians Part 27



T. M. AND SUSIE MOORE

A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Christian's Warfare: 2 Corinthians 10
1 and 2 Corinthians Part 27
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Introduction to *2 Corinthians 10*

Our warfare takes place in a personal sphere—a Personal Mission Field—to which we have been sent as Jesus was sent to bring near the Kingdom of God. Our calling is to the Kingdom and glory of God, to plant the flag of the Gospel in every place by devoting all our relationships, roles, and responsibilities to the Lord for His glory. At the end of each day, we glory in the Lord and what He has done to spread His grace and lead us along the Yes Path with Jesus.

Jesus rides forth each day, conquering and to conquer, on the white horse of His Church—you and me—and in the power of His Spirit.

Make sure you are armed and ready each day.

If you find these studies, or any of our other resources, helpful, we hope you will consider making a contribution to help support our work. You can do so by using the donate button at the website or by sending your gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, 103 Reynolds Lane, West Grove, PA 19390.

We hope you find this study instructive and helpful to equip you for your walk with and work for the Lord. Thank you for joining us.

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1 Holy Boldness

Pray Psalm 86.16, 17.

Oh, turn to me, and have mercy on me!
Give Your strength to Your servant,
And save the son of Your maidservant.
Show me a sign for good,
That those who hate me may see *it* and be ashamed,
Because You, LORD, have helped me and comforted me.

Sing Psalm 86.16, 17.

(Andrews: *Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven*)

Turn to me, LORD; be gracious to me;
grant me Your strength; save Your servant, LORD!
Let me a sign of something good see;
shame all who hate me beneath Your Word.
LORD, be gracious to me, LORD, be gracious to me,
for You help me, sovereign Lord!

Read and meditate on 2 Corinthians 10.1-3.

Preparation

1. How did Paul appear when he was present with the Corinthians?
2. What did he promise about when he came to them again?

Meditation

I get the impression that the false apostles who had caused all the trouble in Corinth were smooth-talking, confident, and loud. They made themselves the center of attention, which is why the “babes-in-Christ” Corinthians gravitated to one or another of them. Paul, after all, was not eloquent, neither did he push himself on others (1 Cor. 2.1-5). Paul was getting ready to come to Corinth again, and again he would be “lowly” among them (v. 1). He was, after all, still Paul.

But they must not mistake that lowliness as somehow weakness. What they saw outwardly was the “meekness and gentleness of Christ”; what lurked inwardly was the lion side of the Savior. They had experienced Paul’s great boldness through his first epistle. But he did not expect to have to be that way when he came among them (vv. 1, 2), for grace was flowing again and they were back on the Yes Path with Jesus.

But some folks there in Corinth were going to feel the lion’s breath (v. 2). Paul saw himself as at war with all false teaching, and it was not a war he would wage with his gentle, meek, and lowly flesh. His words, joined with all the weaponry of spiritual warfare (v. 3; cf. Eph. 6.10-20), would expose, humble, and pull down those false teachers, if indeed any were still sticking around.

This is how Jesus was. He confessed that He was gentle and lowly; yet He bound the strong man, broke the bonds of death, repudiated the sting of the grave, and gained the victory of eternal glory. The Lion of the tribe of Judah lives in each of us who believes. He is gentle and lowly in appearance, but holy boldness is ready within us to break forth against all lies and distortions of truth.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Paul was a master in self-awareness. He had the ability to perceive and understand himself clearly. And being filled with the Holy Spirit only heightened his gift. “When I am in your presence, I am perceived as being

lowly and gentle; but when I am in absentia, I am far bolder with you.” (2 Cor. 10.1)

“And contrary to the false teachers’ words, this is not because I am far from the Lord and living carnally (2 Cor. 10.2, 3). If you want to see boldness in me, get ready, for I may have to become that in your presence. It is altogether possible.”

“I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some” (1 Cor. 9.22). Paul, imitating Jesus (1 Cor. 11.1), as He exemplified the many facets of grace, love, mercy, and indignation in action.

“Come to Me...for I am gentle and lowly in heart...” (Matt. 11.28, 29). A welcoming and empathetic word.

“And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said to him, ‘Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.’ So Peter went out and wept bitterly” (Lk. 22.61, 62). Without a word, but only a withering look.

“Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks...For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned” (Matt. 12.34, 37). A word of blistering condemnation.

“When He had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers’ money and overturned the tables. And He said to those who sold doves, ‘Take these things away! Do not make My Father’s house a house of merchandise!’” (Jn. 2.15, 16) Acts and words of righteous indignation.

“As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love.” A word on abiding love.

“These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.” An explanatory word on joy and how to keep it.

“This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.” A word of commandment.

“Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.” A word on amazing love and grace, and how to incorporate that abounding, abundance into our life and work. (Jn. 15.9-14).

Holy boldness, in all its iterations, is a beautiful thing to observe, worked out in the life of Jesus, and Paul, and many others—past and present. Quite simply, holy boldness can become ours too—as we daily, through the Word of God and power of the Holy Spirit, contemplate it, meditate on it, and pray it into our lives—for God’s glory and the good of others.

“I will meditate on Your precepts, and contemplate Your ways.
I will delight myself in Your statutes; I will not forget Your word” (Ps. 119.15, 16).

Words of guidance for the self-aware:

Without Him we can do nothing (Jn. 15.5); but with Him and His Word and Spirit, all things are possible (Lk. 1.37): even holy love, grace, mercy, peace, joy, and boldness!

For reflection

1. In working your Personal Mission Field, where would you like to know more holy boldness?

2. Does holy boldness mean we don't speak the truth in love? Explain.
3. What would you say are the keys to having holy boldness when you need it?

Having completed his discourse on almsgiving, Paul now turns to less pleasant matters, concluding his epistle with denunciations of the false apostles. He offers explanations of himself and his ministry. Indeed, it would not be wrong to say that the whole epistle is an apology for Paul, because he makes so much mention of the grace and patience given to him. John Chrysostom (344-407), Homilies on the Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians 21.1

Pray Psalm 86.7-15.

Pray for patience and holy boldness, as needed, to fulfill your calling as a witness to the Lord and sower of His Word.

Sing Psalm 86.7-15.

(Andrews: *Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven*)

When in my trouble, LORD, I call You,
You answer me; there is none like You!
There are no works like Yours, and all whom
You have created shall worship You.
LORD, be gracious to me, LORD, be gracious to me,
all shall glory give to You!

For You are great, You wondrous do;
You are the only and sovereign LORD.
Teach me Your way, let me give heed to,
with all my heart, Savior, all Your Word!
LORD, be gracious to me, LORD, be gracious to me,
praise Your Name forever, LORD!

Great is Your mercy, LORD, toward me;
You have delivered my soul from hell.
Though dreadful foes and threats arrayed be,
You will Your grace and Your mercy tell!
LORD, be gracious to me, LORD, be gracious to me,
slow to anger, loving well!

2 The Mind of Christ

Pray Psalm 33.1-5

Rejoice in the LORD, O you righteous!
For praise from the upright is beautiful.
Praise the LORD with the harp;
Make melody to Him with an instrument of ten strings.
Sing to Him a new song;
Play skillfully with a shout of joy.
For the word of the LORD *is* right,
And all His work *is done* in truth.
He loves righteousness and justice;
The earth is full of the goodness of the LORD.

Sing Psalm 33.1-5.

(Truro: *Shout, for the Blessed Jesus Reigns*)

Sing with rejoicing in the LORD, for praise becomes His righteous ones!
With harps and songs raise grateful words, and let new songs of praise be sung!

Joyfully shout! His Word is true; He does His work in faithfulness.
His love prevails the whole world through; the LORD loves truth and righteousness.

Read 2 Corinthians 10.1-6; meditate on verses 4-6.

Preparation

1. How do we as Christians “walk”?
2. What is the goal of our “warfare”?

Meditation

Here Paul describes the disciplining of the mind, which is the duty of every believer.

The lie—whatever denies the knowledge of God (Rom. 1.18-32)—and its attendant evils are pervasive in our world, as they were in Paul’s. Nothing escapes the discoloration and distortion the lie causes, as people suppress the truth about Christ and His Kingdom by their unrighteous ideas, words, and deeds.

Because all things are thus garbed in a cloud of untruth and wrong belief, nothing can realize its full potential of beauty, goodness, truth, and the glory of God and blessing of the world. This is true of everything—relationships, communications, work, study, art, science, and all disciplines and vocations. Only Christ can redeem all things, reconcile them to God, and renew them in His Kingdom power. And He does this through His people, who possess the mind, Word, Spirit, and power of Christ for making all things new.

And the weapons of spiritual warfare which are indispensable to daily life.

We must learn to identify the lie in all areas of life, whether its presence be great or small, and to expose and dismantle it, replacing it with the teaching of Christ for all things. For this we must be well trained in the use of all the weapons of our warfare, (Eph. 6.10-20) and become skilled in directing them at every dark redoubt of the lie in every area of human life and interest.

Every thought captive for obedience to Christ. It’s part of our calling to the Kingdom and glory of God.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162.

We utilize the mind of Christ, which is ours to use because we belong to Him, and are “mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ”—*when* our “obedience is fulfilled” (2 Cor. 10.4-6). There’s always a catch!

We will only properly wield the weapons of spiritual warfare *when* we are obedient to God. But look at the power of just being obedient to His Law: “Those who forsake the law praise the wicked, but such as keep the law contend with them” (Prov. 28.4). There is power in keeping God’s Law—we are taking a vital stand against evil merely by doing so.

In our own house, in our neighborhood, in our work, in our worship, in our use of commerce, in everything that pertains to our life—we are caped crusaders against evil. By keeping God’s Law. Impressive.

But imagine for a moment, that we might get an opportunity like Elijah did, to physically cast down foolish arguments against the knowledge of God. His work that day, with the prophets of Baal, must have been fearful and exhausting, and yet invigorating!

What great lines he was allowed to utter: “So it was at noon, that Elijah mocked them and said, ‘Cry aloud, for he is a god; either he is meditating, or he is busy, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is sleeping and must be awakened’” (1 Kgs. 18.27).

The prophets were getting no answer from their non-god Baal. They sought to exalt a god that was not a god at all. And Elijah with great wit and wisdom was able to cast down their stronghold, and through the power of God, convincingly burn up the sacrifice. “Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood and the stones and the dust, and it licked up the water that was in the trench” (1 Kgs. 18.38).

And after all those astonishing pyrotechnics the real miracle occurred: ‘Now when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, ‘The LORD, He is God! The LORD, He is God!’” (1 Kgs. 18.39). The power point and wonder of it all.

Elijah had some slow days, and some amazing days, but he dressed for battle every day (Eph. 6.10-20). He was always ready to pull and cast down anything that vaunted itself against the knowledge of God. He was obediently ready.

And we have the mind of Christ, Who was also always ready for the fray.

When we walk with Jesus, obey His Word, and take all our own thoughts captive to His grace, *then* He will use us in the most exciting ways—days slow and amazing—yet always full of His glory.

What a life!

For reflection

1. Where are you challenged in your Personal Mission Field to take every thought captive for obedience to Christ?
2. What can we do to improve in using the mind of Christ?
3. In which of the weapons of our spiritual warfare do you need to improve (Eph. 6.10-20)?

... *we must give up our own understanding, and renounce the wisdom of the flesh, and thus we must present our minds to Christ empty that he may fill them.* John Calvin (1509-1564), *Commentary on 2 Corinthians 10.1-6*

The Christian's Warfare: 2 Corinthians 9

Pray Psalm 33.13-22.

Call on the Lord to give you the mind of Christ for all your activities today, that you may think like Jesus does and act as He would in every situation and at every opportunity.

Sing Psalm 33.13-22.

(Truro: *Sbout, for the Blessed Jesus Reigns*)

God from His throne looks down on men; He knows our works and made our hearts.

Let not Your Church, let none depend on strength or skill or human arts.

God watches those who fear His Name, who hope upon His grace and love:

He keeps their souls from death and shame who trust in Him Who reigns above.

God is our Helper and our Shield; upon us let Your grace descend!

We hope in You; to You we yield; we trust in Jesus to the end.

3 The Use of Authority

Pray Psalm 71.23, 24.

My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing to You,
And my soul, which You have redeemed.
My tongue also shall talk of Your righteousness all the day long;
For they are confounded,
For they are brought to shame
Who seek my hurt.

Sing Psalm 71.23, 24.

(Solid Rock: *My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less*)

My lips with joy and praises ring; to You, Redeemer, praise I bring!
I praise Your goodness all day long; LORD, humble all who do me wrong.
Refrain v. 3

A Rock of habitation be; command Your Word to rescue me;
my Rock and Fortress ever be!

Read 2 Corinthians 10.1-9; meditate on verses 7-9.

Preparation

1. Where authority is concerned, on what must we not look?
2. Why did Paul have authority? To what end?

Meditation

Paul's authority had been challenged by false apostles who depended more on outward show than inward grace. And the Corinthians had bought it. They had allowed the false teachers to divide the church, and when that happened all manner of "outward appearances" began to matter most.

Paul addressed those in 1 Corinthians, but for his ministry to realize its full potential with the Corinthians, he had to make sure they were focused where he was—not on outward appearance but on inward grace and its fruits. Paul acknowledged that he was as much a Christian as any of the Corinthians (v. 7). But, unlike them, he wasn't focused on anything but the grace of God working for their obedience. Paul's authority operated on a variety of levels. He had authority as an apostle, as a minister of the Word, and as the one used by God to bring the Corinthians to faith in Jesus. He never used that authority for any self-serving reasons, but only that the churches might be built-up in the Lord (v. 8). All proper use of authority is for edifying God's people, not for advancing one's agenda or status.

So his letters—"weighty and powerful" as they were (v. 10)—were not intended to bring the Corinthians down but to build them up (vv. 8, 9). They should receive this second epistle as they did the first and act on its instruction accordingly. By so doing, when their obedience was fulfilled, they would know the power of grace to transform them into the likeness of Christ, so that true joy would become their constant companion and abundant thanks and praise would rise to God for the grace shown in their obedience.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Paul had authority and wrote and spoke with authority. Rightly so.

But Paul is not the only one in Kingdom work who has authority.

Each one of us has some authority over someone else, somewhere in our Personal Mission Field, and each opportunity is to be used for the other's edification, not their destruction—husbands over wives, parents over children, employers over employees, elders over their sheep, deacons over their sheep, pastors over the elders and deacons, Sunday School teachers over their pupils, school teachers over their students, drivers over their cars, caregivers over the weak and aged, humans over pets, buyers over customer care, government workers over their constituents (although it should really be the other way around), librarians over book-seekers, and so on and so forth—this merely scratches the surface.

As believers, every position of authority that comes our way, should only be used for the edification of others. Period. Paul clarifies this at the end of this second letter: "Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the authority which the Lord has given me for edification and not for destruction" (2 Cor. 13.10).

Love is not puffed up, nor does it behave rudely (1 Cor. 13.4, 5).
"Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies" (1 Cor. 8.1).

Boaz, with all his elderly clout, could have bulldozed his way into Ruth's life, but he chose to use his wealth and authority for good, and not for destruction. He politely and correctly followed all the rules and sat down with the elders and hashed it out for Ruth's and the town's edification. Ours too, for that matter, as Jesus descended through his new family (Matt. 1.5). Well done, Boaz. (Ruth 3.12-4.13)

And then there is Joseph—hated and abused by his brothers—who edified them when he could just as easily and deservedly destroyed them. "But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive" (Gen. 50.20). The wicked brothers were edified, and again, we too were blessed, because Jesus descended through them as well (Matt. 1.2).

"Unless the LORD builds the house, they labor in vain who build it..." (Ps. 127.1).

God's Church must be built His way, for His glory, through edification and not by destructive authoritarianism—which let's admit—has been rampant throughout Christendom past, present, and will continue into the future—unless we stop the pattern.

Paul wrote that we need to set our worldly ways aside "and grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share" and then that "causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love" (Eph. 4.15, 16). Authorities in edification!

For reflection

1. What edifies you? What makes you want to grow and serve others?
2. What are some ways you are working to edify the people in your Personal Mission Field?
3. What is your role in helping your church "grow up" into Christ in all things (Eph. 4.16)?

Paul ascribes his gift to God and points out that it was given for the common good. His work of answering arguments, detecting what is unsound and laying the proper foundation is all intended for the upbuilding of the community. But if anybody is hostile and wants to do battle with him, he also has the power to answer arguments and will use it as and when it is appropriate to do so. John Chrysostom (344-407), Homilies on the Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians 22.1

Pray Psalm 71.14-18.

Pray that God will grant you power today to live as His witness and to make the most of every opportunity to share Jesus and build others up in Him.

Sing Psalm 71.14-18.

(Solid Rock: *My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less*)

But as for me my voice I raise to sing in hope and constant praise!
With saving grace my voice will swell Your never-ending grace to tell.

Refrain v. 3

A Rock of habitation be; command Your Word to rescue me;
my Rock and Fortress ever be!

O LORD, I praise Your righteousness Who me from youth have taught and blessed.
Forsake me not when I am old, 'til I Your mercies all have told!

Refrain v. 3

4 No Comparison

Pray Psalm 52.8, 9.

But I *am* like a green olive tree in the house of God;
I trust in the mercy of God forever and ever.
I will praise You forever,
Because You have done *it*;
And in the presence of Your saints
I will wait on Your name, for *it is* good.

Sing Psalm 52.8, 9.

(Warrington: *Give to Our God Immortal Praise*)

But as for me may I be seen in God an olive ever green!
Ever in God, most kind and just, shall I with joy and gladness trust!

Thanks evermore to our Savior be raised! His faithfulness be ever praised!
Here with Your people, loving God, I wait upon Your Name, so good!

Read 2 Corinthians 10.1-12; meditate on verses 10-12.

Preparation

1. What were the false teachers saying about Paul?
2. What did Paul say about them?

Meditation

We get the feeling that Paul was preparing for a showdown with the false teachers when he returned to Corinth. He knew what they were saying about him, how they were comparing his weak appearance to their robust self-confidence; his “contemptible” speech to their grandiloquence; his boldness in writing but meekness in person, to their ability to wow and win a following (v. 1).

Paul warned people who were thinking this way that they would see a different side of him when he returned to Corinth (v. 11). And not just in word, but “in deed”. He did not explain what that might mean, but we can imagine it set the false teachers to some consternation of soul. Perhaps they remembered how Jesus cleared the temple (1 Cor. 11.1)?

The schism that wracked the churches in Corinth, and which was by the writing of 2 Corinthians beginning to heal, was the product of brash men vaunting themselves and their views over the absent Paul, creating cliques and leading people to identify with their ersatz superiority. We should not compare ourselves with one another, but only with Jesus. Only by looking at ourselves in the mirror of Jesus can we know glory and grace to make us more like Him (2 Cor. 3.12-18). We are unwise to compare ourselves—typically favorably—with others (v. 12).

The only comparison that mattered to Paul was how he and other believers stood up in the Presence of the Lord. Beyond that, no comparisons were of any value, only building one another up in love.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

You can tell which side of the tracks you think you were born on, when you determine what the other side is.

I don't know who said this, but the truth of it resonates. Comparisons delineate. No doubt about it.

But Paul recommends that we abstain. “For we dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves. But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise” (2 Cor. 10.12). So, some may vaunt themselves by comparison; others, just as surely, denigrate themselves. It all boils down to our perception of ourselves—which side of the tracks?

Jesus put the final nail in the comparison coffin when Peter questioned him about his fate. Jesus had just told him, “‘when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish.’ This He spoke signifying by what death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, ‘Follow Me.’ Then Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following...seeing him, [Peter] said to Jesus, ‘But Lord, what about this man?’” (Jn. 21. 18-21).

And here we have Jesus’ thoughts on comparisons. “If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you? You follow Me” (Jn. 21.18-22).

Even when it comes to our sin, we must not compare ourselves with others. As David prayed, “Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight...” (Ps. 51.4).

As Isaiah wrote, “But we are all like an unclean thing; and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; we all fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away” (Is. 64.6). All unclean before Him. And Paul adds, “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3.23). All sin, all fall short.

And all cared for and loved by our heavenly Father. No comparisons. No partiality (Acts 10.34). “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (Jn. 3.16). “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5.8).

Whether we ever thought to vaunt or denigrate ourselves in comparison to another is wasted energy, pointless, and sinful. Most assuredly, placing us on the wrong side of the tracks from God.

“The only comparison that mattered to Paul was how he and other believers stood up in the Presence of the Lord. Beyond that, no comparisons were of any value, only building one another up in love...Only by looking at ourselves in the mirror of Jesus can we know glory and grace to make us more like Him.”

And that we must daily and unabashedly compare!

For reflection

1. Why do we play the “comparisons game”? What drives us to want to compare ourselves favorably or over or unfavorably against others?
2. What can we do to make Jesus increasingly the most meaningful focal point of our comparisons?
3. Whom will you encourage today with a word from Jesus?

There is not a more fruitful source of error, than to judge of persons and opinions by our own prejudices. How common is it for persons to judge of their own religious character, by the opinions and maxims of the world around them! But how different is the rule of God's word! Matthew Henry (1662-1714), Commentary on 2 Corinthians 10.12

Pray Psalm 52.1-7.

Pray that God will silence all who boast in themselves and vaunt themselves by putting others down. Pray that He will keep you from so doing, and that the fear of His chastising grace (Heb. 12.3-11) will lead you to build others up in Him today.

Sing Psalm 52.1-7.

(Warrington: *Give to Our God Immortal Praise*)

Why do the mighty boast in sin? God's love endures, it knows no end!
They with their tongues vain boasts repeat, and like a razor, work deceit.

Men more than good in evil delight, and lies prefer to what is right.
They utter words both harsh and strong with their devouring, deceitful tongue.

God will forever break them down, uproot, and cast them to the ground!
He from their safety tears them away, no more to know the light of day.

The righteous see and laugh and fear, and say, "Behold, what have we here?
Such are all who at God conspire, and wealth and evil ways desire."

5 Spheres

Pray Psalm 34.1-3.

I will bless the LORD at all times;
His praise shall continually *be* in my mouth.
My soul shall make its boast in the LORD;
The humble shall hear *of it* and be glad.
Oh, magnify the LORD with me,
And let us exalt His name together.

Sing Psalm 34.1-3.

(Alleluia [Lowe]: *Mighty God, While Angels Bless You*)

I will bless the LORD at all times; I shall praise Him evermore!
My soul makes its boast in Jesus—Him we gladly all adore!
Refrain v. 3
Magnify the Name of Jesus! Let us lift His Name in praise!

Read 2 Corinthians 10.1-16; meditate on verses 13-16.

Preparation

1. What was Paul's "sphere"?
2. What was his hope for that "sphere"?

Meditation

Paul says that God had appointed him a "sphere", that is, an area or region in which to do the work of being an apostle (v. 13). The Corinthians were within that sphere, and so he brought the Gospel to them and continued ministering among them for nearly two years.

Whatever boasting he did was not about himself—unlike the false apostles—but only about the Lord and His work. As he worked, Paul held on to the hope that the Corinthians would grow in faith and that his sphere would be greatly enlarged as the Corinthians took up the work of the Gospel (v. 15), as had happened at Ephesus and Thessalonica, among other places.

Paul hoped to expand his ministry sphere beyond the Corinthians to other cities and regions (v. 16), so that he might realize more fruit and have more reasons to boast in the Lord.

We can think of Paul's sphere as his Personal Mission Field. Emulating him (1 Cor. 11.1), we know that God has appointed us a sphere as well, where Jesus sends us, as He was sent, to bring the Good News of the Kingdom by word and deed (Jn. 20.21). In this sphere, we are the Lord's grace-spreaders, to the end that boasting in Him might increase.

What would our world be like if every Christian owned and worked their Personal Mission Field as zealously and diligently as Paul?

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162.

"Stay in your lane" can be seen as a snarky statement, telling us not to express thoughts or opinions on subjects about which we have insufficient knowledge or an inability to comprehend or understand.

But Paul, in the nicest possible way, was suggesting the same as a positive notion. Work in your sphere, stay in your Personal Mission Field. It is where God has placed you and it is where God can use you best!

We have been saved by God's grace and mercy, not by our good works; but our good works are the litmus test and the outcome of our being saved. "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2.8-10). In our sphere, in our Personal Mission Field.

On a recent episode of *Dr. Jeff: Rocky Mountain Vet*, a deaf dog rescued from flooding in Louisiana, was adopted by a deaf woman in Colorado. How symbiotic, sweet, and useful that pairing was! What joy and comfort it brought to them both. How kind the Lord is toward His creation!

And that kind of thing happens every moment of every day in the sphere that God has placed us in. We are right where we are supposed to be, working and ministering with, and to, those God has placed there. With us. It all makes sense.

Just like the deaf dog and woman. That dog was not sent off for training at *Guide Dogs for the Blind* (as helpful and amazing as that entity is), he was sent to this woman who needed him as much as he needed her.

"Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know" (Jer. 33.3). That was true then, it is just as true now. Great and mighty things are in store for those who walk faithfully in the place that God has put them.

That is us. Not compared to anyone else.
It is now. Not some other time in history.
In our sphere. Not someone else's.
Staying in our lane.
For His work and glory. Only.

For reflection

1. How would you explain your Personal Mission Field to a fellow believer?
2. How would you help that believer discover their own Personal Mission Field?
3. Whom will you encourage today to "stay in their lane" in their Personal Mission Field, working it faithfully for the Lord?

... he shows what is the true measure of glorying — when we keep within the limits that have been marked out for us by the Lord. "Has the Lord given me such a thing? I shall be satisfied with this measure. I shall not either desire or claim to myself any thing more." This he calls the measure of his rule. John Calvin (1509-1564), *Commentary on 2 Corinthians 10.13-16*

Pray Psalm 34.4-9.

Seek the Lord for this day's work in your Personal Mission Field. Pray that He will prepare and equip you to spread His grace to the people you see today. Look to Him throughout the day for grace and guidance.

Sing Psalm 34.4-9.

(Alleluia [Lowe]: *Mighty God, While Angels Bless You*)

When I sought the LORD, He answered and from fear delivered me.
Those who look to Him are radiant; shamed their face shall never be.
Refrain v. 3

Magnify the Name of Jesus! Let us lift His Name in praise!

When I cried to God, He heard me, and from trouble rescued me.

The Christian's Warfare: 2 Corinthians 9

Round their camp His angel lingers that they may delivered be.

Refrain

Taste and see how good is Jesus; blessed are all who in Him hide.

None shall lack for any blessing who in Christ will e'er confide.

Refrain

6 Glory in the Lord

Pray Psalm 48.1-3.

Great *is* the LORD, and greatly to be praised
In the city of our God,
In His holy mountain.
Beautiful in elevation,
The joy of the whole earth,
Is Mount Zion on the sides of the north,
The city of the great King.
God *is* in her palaces;
He is known as her refuge.

Sing Psalm 48.1-3.

(Cwm Rhondda: *Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah*)

Great is God, now greatly praise Him in the city of the LORD!
Holy she, His lovely mountain, great and glorious by His Word!
God her King is great within her, He, her Stronghold ever sure!
He, her Stronghold ever sure!

Read 2 Corinthians 10.1-18; meditate on verses 17, 18.

Prepare

1. How should we glory?
2. Whose commendation should we seek?

Meditation

We boast about and glory in ourselves in subtle ways. Taking credit for this or that. Talking about ourselves and our humility. Comparing ourselves favorably with others. Hanging our awards on the wall. Making every effort to have the last word on a matter. Snubbing this person, fawning over that one. All such boasting is sin.

This is not to deny that there is much that is boast-worthy in our lives, at least, as some might see us. But we remember Paul in 1 Corinthians 4 reminding us that all that we have has come to us from the Lord. Why do we boast about these things, as if we had acquired or achieved them on our own?

The church-dividers in Corinth boasted in themselves. This was part of how they achieved their following. They were not content to stay in their own lane of ministry but were always seeking to hijack believers from other camps. The Corinthians went along with this and in so doing, did a little boasting of their own (“I am of Paul!” “I am of Apollos!” “I am of Cephas!”). All such boasting is sin. It divides churches (Do you wonder why there are 35,000 Protestant *denominations* in the world?).

Boasting in ourselves and our tribe comes easily. And sinfully. Do we even know how to boast in the Lord?

The LORD Himself tells us:

“Let not the wise *man* glory in his wisdom,
Let not the mighty *man* glory in his might,
Nor let the rich *man* glory in his riches;
But let him who glories glory in this,
That he understands and knows Me,
That I am the LORD, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth.
For in these I delight,” says the LORD. (Jer. 9.23, 24)

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Because we are human, sinful, and confused, we sometimes think in convoluted ways.

We might be tempted to think we had accomplished something grand, when really the strength, fortitude, and wherewithal came from God—often through the grace of other people.

We might be ever so slightly tempted to even glory in ourselves over...you name it. Anything. And we would be wrong to do so.

God rightly affirms our wrongness: “Surely you have things turned around!” (See what I mean?)

“Shall the potter be esteemed as the clay; for shall the thing made say of him who made it, ‘He did not make me?’ Or shall the thing formed say of him who formed it, ‘He has no understanding?’” (Is. 29.16). Um. No.

So why would we ever think to praise or glory in ourselves over anything?

Talk about veering egregiously out of our lane?

“But now, O LORD, You are our Father;
we are the clay, and You our potter;
and all we are the work of Your hand” (Is. 64.8).

Let us “glory in the LORD”! (2 Cor. 10.17).

Everything that we are and have comes from God. We are sustained in and by Him.

We are “like a tree planted by the rivers of water” (Ps. 1.3).

“For in Him we live and move and have our being...” (Acts 17.28).

“But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption—that, as it is written, ‘He who glories, let him glory in the LORD’” (1 Cor. 1.30, 31).

Job, after all his suffering and questioning and experiences, came to this conclusion:

“I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You.

Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes” (Job 42.5, 6).

He could very easily have patted himself on the back and rejoiced in his mighty survival skills; but instead, he was humbled by God’s greatness and praised His glorious Name.

He rightly gloried in the LORD.

*Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!
Thou are the Potter, I am the clay.
Mold me and make me after Thy will,
While I am waiting yielded and still.*

*Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!
Hold o’er my being absolute sway!
Fill with thy Spirit till all shall see
Christ only, always, living in me!
(Adelaide A. Pollard, 1902)*

For reflection

1. Think back to ways the grace of God reached you or used you yesterday. Give Him specific thanks and praise.

2. How do you need His grace to reach and use you today? Call on Him specifically for mercy and grace for all your times of need.

3. Will you have an opportunity with another believer today to glory in the Lord together? How should you prepare for this now?

Therefore, instead of praising ourselves, we should strive to approve ourselves to God. In a word, let us glory in the Lord our salvation, and in all other things only as evidences of his love, or means of promoting his glory. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), Commentary on 2 Corinthians 10.12-18

Pray Psalm 48.4-14.

Pray that God will glorify Himself in your life, by the words and deeds with which you serve Him today. Pray for specific situations and opportunities, that your manner might speak of heavenly matters to the people around you.

Sing Psalm 48.4-14.

(Cwm Rhondda: *Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah*)

Earthly kings, amazed and wond'ring, look upon the Church with fear.
See them flee in dread and anguish, knowing that the LORD is near.
For the city of the Savior God will keep forevermore!
God will keep forevermore!

For Your grace and lovingkindness we proclaim Your matchless worth!
As Your Name is, great and boundless, let Your praise fill all the earth.
Let Your people sing rejoicing for the judgment of Your truth;
for the judgment of Your truth.

Walk about the blessed city, see her beauty, see her power.
Count her ramparts, filled with glory, look on every mighty tower.
Tell her glory to the nations: God will guide her evermore;
God will guide her evermore!

7 The Christian's Warfare

Pray Psalm 46.1-3.

God is our refuge and strength,
A very present help in trouble.
Therefore we will not fear,
Even though the earth be removed,
And though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;
Though its waters roar *and* be troubled,
Though the mountains shake with its swelling.
Selah

Sing Psalm 46.1-3.

(St. Chrysostom: *We Have Not Known Thee As We Ought*)

God is our refuge and our strength; He is our help in times of need.
Thus though the earth beneath us should change, the sea engulf the mountain range.
Waters may roar with raging speed; yet God will rescue us at length.

Review 2 Corinthians 10.1-18; meditate on verses 3-5, 8, 13-16.

Preparation

1. What the nature of the Christian's warfare?
2. What are its goals?

Meditation

Perhaps in the minds of most Christians the *locus classicus* for our warfare is Ephesians 6.10-20. Here we learn about the weapons God has provided for every believer as we strive to gain daily victories in the Lord. Our duty is to understand, master, and wield these weapons day by day. But 2 Corinthians 10 adds important insights to our warfare, establishing more of the context in which we use those glorious weapons.

In verses 3-5 we learn that our warfare is both spiritual and intellectual. We fight our battles at the spiritual level, employing the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2.16) to take every thought captive for Jesus and to demolish everything that exalts itself against the knowledge of God. Thus, the objective of our warfare is the exaltation of Christ as God, which we realize through obedience to His Word.

In verses 7-11 Paul reminds us that we are charged with a mandate that comes from the unseen realm, where Jesus is enthroned in glory, a mandate which we carry out in humility but with power in our own spheres. We look only to the Lord, that we might be more like Him and gain more of the victory He has secured by His life, death, resurrection, ascension, and rule (v. 12).

Our warfare takes place in a personal sphere—a Personal Mission Field—to which we have been sent as Jesus was sent to bring near the Kingdom of God (vv. 13-18; Jn. 20.21; Matt. 4.17). Our calling is to the Kingdom and glory of God (1 Thess. 2.12), to plant the flag of the Gospel in every place by devoting all our relationships, roles, and responsibilities to the Lord for His glory. At the end of each day, we glory in the Lord and what He has done to spread His grace and lead us along the Yes Path with Jesus.

Jesus rides forth each day, conquering and to conquer, on the white horse of His Church—you and me—and in the power of His Spirit (Rev. 6.2; cf. Ps. 45.1-4). Make sure you are armed and ready each day.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Although our souls abide in bodies of flesh and blood, the battles we encounter take place in another realm—a spiritual realm. Therefore, the weapons we use to deflect our enemies are also of a spiritual nature. “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Eph. 6.12).

As Elisha comforted and encouraged his fellow believer, so God comforts us. We can hear Elisha say, as clearly to us: “Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.’ And Elisha prayed, and said, ‘LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see.’ Then the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha” (2 Kgs. 6.16, 17).

The mountain was full of God’s horses and chariots. They were surrounded by heavenly beings of love and protection. They were in God’s hands, and there was nothing to fear.

Our battle is raging daily—hourly—and we must be always ready to deflect. We must never think that we are above the fray. We are in it, we are vulnerable, and we need God’s help. As Paul warned, “Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall” (1 Cor. 10.12).

When we fight with spiritual weaponry we are then “mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, and casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor. 10.4, 5). No artillery required.

“His truth shall be your shield and buckler” (Ps. 91.4).

“We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty,
The One Who is and Who was and Who is to come,
Because You have taken Your great power and reigned” (Rev. 11.17).

“...above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one” (Eph. 6.16).

Ready, willing, and able, in the Holy Spirit, for the daily work, warfare, and activity in our personal sphere.

For reflection

1. How do you prepare for your warfare each day?
2. What are you doing to improve your use of our spiritual weapons?
3. How do you pray for the people in your Personal Mission Field?

The work of the ministry is a spiritual warfare with spiritual enemies, and for spiritual purposes. Outward force is not the method of the gospel, but strong persuasions, by the power of truth and the meekness of wisdom. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), Commentary on 2 Corinthians 10.1-6

Pray Psalm 46.4-11.

Pray that the Lord will strengthen, equip, and send you into your warfare today, that you may spread His grace and bear witness to Jesus in all you do.

Sing Psalm 46.4-11.

(St. Chrysostom: *We Have Not Known Thee As We Ought*)

God’s everlasting, joyous grace gladdens the city where He dwells.

Safely in Him, we will not be moved; when morning dawns, His love will be proved.

The Christian's Warfare: 2 Corinthians 9

Fears and distresses Jesus dispels for His beloved, chosen race.

Kingdoms arise and rage and roar, threat'ning the earth with sore distress.
Nations may fall, earth melt away, His Word is yet our hope and stay.
God is among us, ever to bless; He is our stronghold evermore.

Come see the works of God's Right Hand! He breaks the nations of the earth,
shatters their foolish weapons and pride, sets all their sinful strength aside.
Them He will show His infinite worth as they before His judgment stand.

Rest in the LORD and be at peace, all who are mired in sore travail.
Lift up our God, praise Jesus our Lord; proclaim to all the earth His Word!
God is our stronghold, never to fail; thus may our hope and joy increase!

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

1. In what sense is our warfare “spiritual”?
2. What are the goals of our warfare?
3. By what authority do we undertake this warfare?
4. How would you define the “sphere” which God has assigned to you?
5. What’s the most important lesson you’ve learned from this part of our study of 1 and 2 Corinthians?

For prayer:

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