

## THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

### 2 Corinthians: God's Pattern For Victory Over Severe Ministry Opposition

#### Part XII: Responding To Challenges Of One's Ministry Calling From God, 2 Corinthians 10:1-13:14

##### 1. Judging By The Spiritual Versus The External Viewpoint

(2 Corinthians 10:1-18)

###### I. Introduction

- A. A taxing trial is the trauma of having another alleged Christian critique our work for God as being false.
- B. In such a trial, we need to **VIEW** our calling and ministry **ACCURATELY** so as to *evaluate* them **well**, and Paul provided this accurate kind of view in answering his ministry critics in 2 Corinthians 10:1-18:

###### II. Judging By The Spiritual Versus The External Viewpoint, 2 Corinthians 10:1-18.

- A. From 2 Corinthians 10:1 to the end of his epistle, Paul in a direct way addressed the false apostles' challenge to His ministry at Corinth, Bible Knowledge Commentary, New Testament, p. 576.
- B. As he introduced this subject in 2 Corinthians 10:1-18, he explained the right **way** to *evaluate* a ministry:
  - 1. First, a true ministry's **warfare** is **spiritual, NOT external** as is used by the **ungodly**, 2 Cor. 10:1-11:
    - a. Paul introduced his address on the challenges his critics had of his ministry by alluding to one of their charges, the claim he was meek and gentle in their presence but conversely bold in his absence by his letters, implying Paul was carnally afraid of the Corinthians when with them, 2 Cor. 10:1, 10.
    - b. Actually, Paul had hoped he would not have to be bold in their presence with the boldness he planned for his critics, those who supposed he lived by his sinful nature (like they did), 2 Cor. 10:2.
    - c. In reality, Paul and his ministry team did not wage spiritual war in their human strength, but focused on the immaterial, spiritual realm with the weapons of spiritual gifts and the power of God by faith to pull down strongholds of errant belief with the truth of God in Christ, 2 Corinthians 10:3-5.
    - d. Indeed, Paul planned on using the spiritual power he had as an apostle, and the apostles of Christ had supernatural life-and-death power over other believers (cf. Acts 5:1-11; 20:9-11), to avenge the wrongs done by the false apostles once Paul's readers were freed from their influence, 2 Cor. 10:6.
    - e. Regardless of the criticism Paul's opponents leveled at him -- regardless if they said he did not belong to Christ (10:7), or that he boasted too much of his apostolic authority (10:8), or that he was mightier by letter than in person (10:9-10) -- he urged his readers to note that what he had told them in his absence by letter matched what he told them in person, making him upright, 2 Cor. 10:11.
  - 2. Second, though God's servants are mere human beings, their **success** is measured in their **doing God's will, not in externally comparing themselves to others in false spirituality**, 2 Corinthians 10:12-18:
    - a. One of the errant practices of Paul's foes was their preoccupation with evaluating ministry efforts by external, carnal criteria. That left them comparing Paul with themselves using external, human methods to commend themselves in an errant, carnal and prideful way, 2 Corinthians 10:12a.
    - b. However, Paul noted that to commend one's self by comparing himself to another person meant he was without godly understanding (2 Cor. 10:12b,c), and he explained this in 2 Corinthians 10:13-18: (1) Paul's boast was only in regard to his fulfilling God's assignment for him, and this had included disciplining his Corinthian readers, 10:13 with 2 Timothy 1:6-7. (2) That assignment had involved Paul's team being the first to reach his Corinthian readers with the Gospel (2 Cor. 10:14), and (3) they would not boast beyond limit in the work of others like the false apostles did in boasting in Paul's work that he had begun at Corinth (2 Cor. 10:15a)! (4) Rather, Paul hoped his influence might expand among his readers (2 Cor. 10:15b), (5) but also that he might evangelize others beyond them versus boasting through comparing himself with others who had begun the work as Paul's carnal foes did with him at Corinth, 2 Corinthians 10:16! (6) After all, valid boasting must be done regarding God and His power in the believer to equip him to do His work, for only God and no human minister can commend himself before God in true ministry, 2 Corinthians 10:17-18!

***Lesson:*** Paul revealed that true Christian ministry (1) does not function in the external, but in in the unseen spiritual realm, and (2) it mightily succeeds in discipling when one heeds God in His power!

***Application:*** May we respond to doubts on a ministry's credibility by (1) noting if it works in the false external or the true spiritual realm, and (2) if it heeds God's assignment or only fulfills human goals!