

II CORINTHIANS: MINISTERING TO BELIEVERS FACING FALSE TEACHERS

III. The Apostle Paul's Vindication Of Himself, 2 Corinthians 10:1-13:10

A. Paul's Appeal That His Readers Heed Him To Obey Christ

(2 Corinthians 10:1-6)

I. Introduction

- A. False teachers, claiming to be apostles, had entered the Church at Corinth, and they had tried to promote their own views while discrediting the person and message of the Apostle Paul. (Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 552)
- B. This was a difficult situation for Paul: his readers were immature believers who had been saved out of corrupt backgrounds in a city known for its vice, so they were easy prey for false teachers, and Paul had to be careful how he handled the situation lest his readers think he was being unjustly defensive and thus discredit himself.
- C. Paul had saved his most trying task for the last part of his letter, that of addressing the false apostles who had opposed him, and in opposing him, they had opposed Christ's true apostle, and thus Christ Himself.
- D. 2 Corinthians 10:1-6 is Paul's opening appeal that his readers obey Christ in accepting his credibility. We view the passage for our insight, application and edification (as follows):

II. Paul's Appeal That His Readers Heed Him To Obey Christ, 2 Corinthians 10:1-6.

- A. Paul "was loath to take stern action, but the situation demanded it. His model for this was Christ. Christ's meekness (cf. Matt. 11:29) was a strength of spirit that enabled Him to accept calmly the wrongs done against Himself (e. g., Matt. 27:12-14), but to act with a powerful vengeance on behalf of others (e. g., John 2:15-16). Meekness epitomizes the strength that comes from loving others rather than self," Ibid., p. 576; 2 Cor. 10:1a.
- B. The apostle also bore the attitude of "gentleness" (*epieikeias*, "graciousness," what occurs only here in 2 Cor. 10:1b and in Acts 24:4, Ibid. By the world's standards, gentleness or graciousness was easily interpreted to be "timidity," and Paul's "opponents, the false apostles (2 Cor. 11:13), acknowledged his 'bark' . . . (b)ut his 'bite,' they said, lacked teeth, at least by worldly standards," Ibid.; 2 Corinthians 10:2.
- C. However, it was a great mistake for the false apostles, and those in the Corinthian church who sided with them, to view Paul's ministry as weak by use of worldly standards, for worldly standards involved human might (2 Corinthians 10:3) where Paul and his ministry team possessed spiritual weapons that were not of human might, "but rather" (*alla*, a strong adversative indicating a contrast to what precedes, U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 639; Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 37-38) were "mighty, powerful" (*dunatos*, Ibid., p. 207-208) through **God** to the "tearing down" (*kathairesis*, Ibid., p. 387) of figurative "strongholds, fortresses" (*ochuroma*, Ibid., p. 606), 2 Corinthians 10:4a.
- D. These exploits included Paul and his ministry team's capacity to tear down "sophistries" (*logismos*, Ibid., p. 477-478), that is, "deceptively subtle argumentation" (Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dict., s. v. "sophistry"), and every lofty opinion that was raised up against the knowledge of God, and to take every thought captive to obey Christ, 2 Corinthians 10:4b-5.
- E. Furthermore, Paul was ready to use his life-and-death authority as an apostle (cf. Acts 5:1-11; 13:8-12) to punish every disobedience even in the false apostles (cf. 2 Corinthians 13:2-3) once the obedience of his readers to heed Christ through Paul's ministry was fulfilled, 2 Corinthians 10:6. Paul's approach "to this particular confrontation in Corinth was twofold. First, it was necessary that the Corinthian church express their subjection to Christ by demonstrating loyalty to His representative Paul (5:20; cf. 7:15). In this way their obedience would be complete. Second, when Paul was sure they had repudiated his opponents (cf. 6:14-18), he could then deal directly with the false apostles, knowing that the church supported him," Ibid., Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 577. Paul could then "punish" their disobedience, the word "punish" (*ekdikesai*) "could more forcefully be translated 'avenge' (cf. 1 Cor. 3:17). In other contexts it describes the wrath of God directed against the enemies of His people (Num. 31:2; Deut. 32:43; Rev. 19:2)," Ibid.

Lesson: *Though Paul preferred not to take severe action in using his apostolic authority to punish disobedience in the churches, when he needed to do so to get believers to obey God's Word that he as an apostle had been sent by God to elicit, Paul meekly and gently relied on God's power to tear down strongholds of deceptively subtle arguments and lofty opinions that countered the truth, and to use his apostolic authority to deliver punishment.*

Application: *(1) May we heed the apostles' teachings in accountability to God. (2) If God utilized life-and-death apostolic power to enforce obedience in local churches to the words of the apostles in the Early Church, though we do not have apostles today, may we in all seriousness still obey the apostles' words in great accountability to God!*