

Men's Sunday Night
The Book of 2 Corinthians
"Finding Strength in Weakness"
Lesson 9 – 2 Corinthians 10
"Meekness or Weakness"

This section of 2 Corinthians presents Paul's proof of his apostleship. In this chapter he answers the accusations of his enemies at Corinth. As we read his reply, we can discover the lies they were telling about Paul: that he was not a true apostle since he lacked credentials from the Jerusalem church; that his motives were insincere; that his physical presence was so weak that he deserved no respect; that his letters were bold but he would never back them up in person; and that his promises could not be depended upon.

Keep in mind that Paul was not defending himself in this chapter; he was defending his apostolic office and, therefore, the message he preached. These lies were being spread by the false teachers who had visited Corinth and won over part of the church to their false doctrine.

The Corinthians loved to glory in men. Even though they were preaching a false doctrine (11:4) and taking advantage of the Christians (11:18-20), they were welcomed by the church and honored above Paul, who had founded the church and risked his life for it. "Paul is so weak!" these teachers said, as they lorded it over the church. "Follow us, because we display real power!"

Simply because Paul did not use carnal methods and apply the power of a "strong personality," the believers thought he was a weakling! His weapons were spiritual, not fleshly. Like all of us, Paul "walked in the flesh" (that is, had all the weaknesses of the body), but he did not war after the flesh by depending on fleshly wisdom, human abilities, or physical ability.

The person who judges by appearance always lives to give a good appearance. Paul lived to please God and never tried to be a man-pleaser. He was confident of his calling and credentials from the Lord, and that was all that mattered.

As you review this chapter, you will note several important lessons all of us should learn for being effective workers in the service of Christ:

1. Don't be influenced by physical matters.
2. The most lasting work is done when we use spiritual weapons and tools.
3. Don't judge before the time (1 Cor. 4:5).

Read 2 Corinthians 10:1-6. Pray and answer the following questions:

Though many of the Corinthians responded well to Paul's instructions, some leaders continued to slander and accuse him of being bold in letters but weak in person. In this chapter Paul answers their charges, demonstrating both gentleness and boldness, and puts boasting and weakness in a new perspective.

1. Paul appeals to the Corinthians not on the basis of his credentials but on the basis of the meekness and gentleness of Christ. What does this indicate about the way in which he hopes to deal with them?

2. Paul says he is not waging war "according to the flesh." How did the spiritual warfare that Paul fought, and the spiritual weapons that he used, differ from ordinary warfare and weapons?

Read 2 Corinthians 10:7-11. Pray and answer the following questions:

Sometimes when things seem to be getting better we hear that the situation is worse than we thought. While Paul was writing this letter, he got fresh news that some outside leaders, some so called super apostles, had abused his rightful place. The tone of the letter becomes more assertive and passionate. Now Paul engages in spiritual warfare with principalities, powers and persons who not only oppose Paul but Christ Himself.

3. How does Paul counter the claim and charge made in verses 7-11?

4. How did Paul respond to the accusations against him?

5. Why do people often look only on the surface of things?

6. How can looking only on the surface mislead us?

7. What surface judgments do you tend to make?

Read 2 Corinthians 10:12-18. Pray and answer the following questions:

While serving God in the church and world, people encounter subtle resistance and, sometimes outright opposition. The Christian life is not a playground but a battleground! Paul wants to make peace; not simply keep the peace by covering over the problem. In this study we have much to learn from Paul's pastoral heart.

8. Why is it foolish to measure ourselves by ourselves or to measure ourselves by each other?

9. Why does Paul consider it all right for him to boast about the Corinthian Christians?

10. As the Corinthians grow in faith, what effect can they have on the spread of the good news of Jesus?

11. Paul always had in mind the people who have never heard the gospel. What blesses you about his motivation from Romans 1:14-16?

