

"Paul and His Critics"

Part 1

2 Corinthians 10:1-13:10

Introduction: Tonight as we come back to 2 Corinthians we are stepping into chapter 10. Now there are some people who believe chapters 10-13 actually belong to a different letter. They hold to this belief because of the abrupt change we find from the end of chapter 9 into chapter 10.

Notice 2 Corinthians 9:15

This verse would be very appropriate to use as an ending for chapters 1-9 and even an ending for a letter. It seems that Paul may have taken a break here before taking up his pen again and starting on what is to follow. The abrupt change is seen as we step into chapter 10 for it will be in this chapter and those to follow that Paul will confront his critics. There were still those who were in the church at Corinth who were against Paul. They were the Judaizers who were trying their best to mix Law with grace which was legalism. Paul's message was a message of grace and the Judaizers despised his message for they longed to base their salvation upon their own works.

Now there are a few thoughts which we need to keep in mind here which we have talked about before but we need refreshed. These Judaizers were servants of Satan. They were false apostles.

2 Corinthians 11:13-15

¹³ For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.

¹⁴ And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.

¹⁵ Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.

Let us keep in mind the Bible was not yet complete so these believers at Corinth could not just pick up a Bible to search out all that was being taught by man. They depended upon the teaching/doctrine of the apostles.

Acts 2:41-43

⁴¹ Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.

*⁴² And **they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine** and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.*

⁴³ And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.

So Satan planted false apostles so as to lead the church down a path of destruction. So it is in chapters 10-13 where we shall find Paul addressing his critics with his pen and at the same time promising them he will confront them to their face when he arrives if they do not repent.

Now as we make our way through these chapters we shall see how Paul deals with his critics and in so doing he will teach us how to handle times of confrontation.

I. **Paul's Compassion**

Notice 2 Corinthians 10:1a

Paul presents himself in the MEEKNESS and the GENTLENESS of Jesus Christ. As a soldier of Jesus Christ, Paul does not enter into this confrontation with his critics by swinging a sword. It is his desire to defuse this situation in a very peaceful manner. The best of soldiers are led by compassion. He opens this section pleading with them to be reconciled and he comes to them in the Spirit of Jesus Christ. This by the way is MEEKNESS. Here in this verse we can clearly see that Paul approaches the Corinthian church in the very way in which Jesus Christ would approach them in both MEEKNESS and GENTLENESS.

I want you to think about his approach here. He will send this letter and then it will be months before he arrives and therefore he gives them several months to consider what he has written and eventually to repent.

Meekness is POWER UNDER CONTROL. Meekness is NOT weakness. When meekness is demonstrated in an individual's life they will be free of anger, resentment, and the desire to seek revenge. The person who is meek will endure the pain of criticism and will suffer quietly in the stand which they have taken. The word "gentleness" in this verse speaks of keeping the emotions under control. Here in verse 1 Paul pleads with them in the meekness and the gentleness of Jesus Christ. Jesus is the Supreme Example of meekness and gentleness.

Isaiah 53:7

⁷ He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.

Matthew 27:12-14

¹² And when he was accused of the chief priests and elders, he answered nothing.

¹³ Then said Pilate unto him, Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee?

¹⁴ And he answered him to never a word; insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly.

Luke 23:33-37

³³ And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.

³⁴ Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.

³⁵ And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided him, saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God.

³⁶ And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar,

³⁷ And saying, If thou be the king of the Jews, save thyself.

Jesus was the Supreme Example of meekness and gentleness and it is this very character which Paul is demonstrating here to the church at Corinth.

Galatians 2:20

²⁰ I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

Application:

This is the very way we too are to approach confrontational situations. We are not to approach them in the spirit of anger or in the spirit of vengeance. But we are to approach them in the spirit of meekness and gentleness so as to show forth the Spirit of Jesus

Christ. We are to keep our emotions under control so that in the situation Christ will be seen in us.

1 Peter 2:18-21

¹⁸ *Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the forward [wicked].*

¹⁹ *For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully.*

²⁰ *For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.*

²¹ *For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:*

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus spoke of the meekness and gentleness we are to demonstrate.

Matthew 6:38-48

³⁸ *Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:*

³⁹ *But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.*

⁴⁰ *And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also.*

⁴¹ *And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.*

⁴² *Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.*

⁴³ *Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.*

⁴⁴ *But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;*

⁴⁵ *That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.*

⁴⁶ For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?

⁴⁷ And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?

⁴⁸ Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

Let me get right down to the point of Paul's approach to this situation in 2 Corinthians 10: he approached this situation in a way that we can see that he wanted to extend forgiveness. He was not looking for a fight as some today who have no compassion. The Holy Spirit was working in him and just as God deals with people today in a way that He desires for them to repent so Paul approached this situation in a way in which he was giving them space to repent.

Notice 2 Corinthians 10:1b

Here in the end of this verse Paul seems to be repeating what they have been saying about him. When he was there in person he was BASE which means very humble but when he was absent and he wrote his letters he was bold. John Phillips says here that his critics were insinuating that he was nothing more than a coward. He was a little man in person and a big man with his pen in hand.

This helps us to see that when he was in the presence of these people earlier he walked in humility. He was an Apostle but he never used his calling or position to intimidate those who were around him.

Notice 2 Corinthians 10:10

Here we see their opinion of Paul based upon the visits which he had made. Notice what Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians about his visit.

1 Corinthians 2:1-3

And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God.

² For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

³ And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling.

His critics viewed him as a coward but he was no coward he was just demonstrating the meekness of Jesus Christ which they believed it to be weakness.

II. Paul's Courage

Notice 2 Corinthians 10:2

The contrast here is between what his critics thought and the true courage of Paul. In this verse Paul is pleading with them to repent. But if they were not willing to repent then he wanted them to know that he was coming and when he arrived he would arrive in boldness and great courage. He was not afraid of his critics for he was no coward. He was a man full of confidence but the confidence was not in himself but it was confidence in what he taught and what he believed. He knew his letters were inspired by the Spirit of God and he knew the message he preached was the absolute Truth. Therefore he would stand for the Truth and he would stand toe to toe with his critics if that was the way in which they desired for the confrontation to happen.

When Paul arrived at Corinth the first time he carried on his body the marks of his courage. Let me show you what happened to Paul in Philippi.

Acts 16:23-25

²³ *And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely:*

²⁴ *Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks.*

²⁵ *And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.*

After his release Paul continued on his missionary journey and eventually he came to Corinth.

Acts 18:1

After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth;

When he came to Corinth he was still healing from the beatings in Philippi so he carried into Corinth the marks of his courage. Paul would come to Corinth and he would be bold and he would stand up to the critics if that was needed but as a compassionate soldier he desired that they would repent and this could all be settled in a peaceful way.

Application/Conclusion:

We are all soldiers for Christ and as soldiers we must face our critics with compassion for it should be our greatest desire to see people repent and turn to Jesus Christ or if they are saved to see them understand the Truth. We must learn to be controlled by the Holy Spirit for apart from Him we will be controlled by the flesh and to be controlled by the flesh will lead us to approach people with an abrasive attitude which will often escalate the situation.

In all of this we must understand that spiritual attacks will come if we are living for Jesus Christ and the Truth of God's Word.

This is why it is so important to study the Word of God and to know it for we must be willing to stand and to not be intimidated. There will be people who will do their best to intimidate you so as to silence you or to instill fear so that you will not move forward. This is seen in our society today with the "politically correct movement". They are trying to make it illegal to speak out against sin and therefore it is an attempt to silence the Truth of God's Word. When threatened with a legal action many sink back under the safety net of silence. Let me just say that was never an option for the Apostle Paul. If we allow government to control our speech then my question is, "WHERE IS OUR FAITH?" Let me leave you with the Words which God gave to Joshua as he stepped into the position of leadership over Israel.

Joshua 1:5-9

⁵ *There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.*

⁶ *Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I sware unto their fathers to give them.*

⁷ *Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper withersoever thou goest.*

⁸ *This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.*

⁹ *Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.*