

2Cor. 10:1 ¶ Now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, who in presence *am* base among you, but being absent *am* bold toward you:

It seems as though Paul wants to ensure that the Corinthians hear his heart. He wants them to hear his words seasoned with the *meekness* (humility, gentleness) and *gentleness* (suitableness, equity, mildness) of Christ. After reading several translations, it seems that Paul is known for his humility and gentleness when ministering in person and for using more forthright and intimidating language in his letters.

2Cor. 10:2 But I beseech *you*, that I may not be bold when I am present with that confidence, wherewith I think to be bold against some, which think of us as if we walked according to the flesh.

This verse indicates that Paul is upset by some in Corinth who seem to be telling others that the testimony of his life and his ministry is one of arrogance and pride. They are accusing him of being guided by the world's standards rather than God's standards. He is declaring his intent to be just as forthright in person as in his letters in putting a stop to such a false report.

**2Cor. 10:3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh:
2Cor. 10:4 (For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)**

Paul is basically saying that though he (and his team) live in the world and are subject to limitations and weaknesses of the flesh, he knows their conflict is spiritual and requires spiritual weapons that are without limitation in power and authority. He is confident in having God's provision and empowerment through the Holy Spirit as he faces his enemies as God's representative.

In context, these strongholds represent attacks from enemies that are fortified by the forces of the enemy. He specifically identifies these evil forces in his letter to the Ephesians.

Ephesians 6:11–12 “Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.”

These strongholds are not just attacks against Paul and his ministry team; they are attacks against the God they are serving. In context, these strongholds are presented as verbal attacks using the wisdom of this world.

The enemy is using these same tactics and strongholds today in the form of the new atheists and those within the professing church who obviously do not hold to the truth of God's word. They utilize the wisdom of man to refute and/or corrupt the right representation of the truth. They are outspoken in their rejection of God often using false science to support their arguments, or they

argue using human logic to justify their interpretation of God's word according to their own agendas.

Calvin put it this way: "For nothing is more opposed to the spiritual wisdom of God than the wisdom of the flesh...."

David Guzik expressed it better than I can: "Carnal, worldly ways of thinking and doing are arguments against the mind and methods of God. They want to debate God, saying they have a better way. They exalt themselves against the knowledge of God. They think of themselves as smarter, more sophisticated, more effective, more powerful than God's ways. Carnal, worldly minds think they know more than God does!"

2Cor. 10:5 Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;

This verse is a continuation of the thought from the last. Paul is declaring that it is through spiritual resources, the truth of God's word, that they destroy the human reasoning and the attempts of others to attack that truth. God is the source of truth, and he knows that truth always wins out over the thoughts and logic of men.

This verse was quite interesting to me in that I have mostly heard it applied out of context. I have generally heard it used with regard to controlling one's own wicked thoughts and temptations. Though not strictly in context, the principle of using God's word and spiritual resources to control one's own thoughts is just as valid as using it in confronting the arguments and thoughts of others.

2Cor. 10:6 And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

Paul seems to be expressing his priorities. His primary concern is that the body of believers remains obedient to Christ. After ensuring that to be the case, he will then deal with those who are rebellious and mounting an attack against that faith.

The Greek for *revenge* indicates the intent to vindicate and punish. Webster defines vindication as defending with success. Punishment includes the idea of exacting a penalty with the intent to cause suffering and/or chastening. This allows for a bit of leeway regarding Paul's intentions in light of this statement.

2Cor. 10:7 ¶ Do ye look on things after the outward appearance? If any man trust to himself that he is Christ's, let him of himself think this again, that, as he is Christ's, even so are we Christ's.

The introductory question in this verse seems to be referencing back to verse 1 and the criticism that has been leveled against Paul by his enemies. Evidently his outward appearance was not such that would be inspiring. Paul is basically

saying that he (and those ministering with him) are just as much a part of the body of Christ as anyone else who has placed faith in Jesus. David Guzik provided this description of Paul from some of his research: "This is a description of Paul from an early Christian writing, perhaps from about the year 200: 'a man of small stature, with a bald head and crooked legs, in a good state of body, with eyebrows meeting and nose somewhat hooked.' (Cited in Kruse) Hardly magnetic good looks!"

Frankly, not many of us would inspire others based on our outward appearance. As the Lord so pointedly declared to Samuel, man tends to place too much emphasis on one's outward appearance; but He is also very clear that it is what is inside that counts—the character of the man. Appearances can be deceiving.

1 Samuel 16:7 "But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart."

Paul is basically saying—Look at yourself; does your outward appearance inspire confidence of your position in Christ. If you know that you are in Christ, you can be just as sure that we are in Christ.

I can't help but think how we seem to judge those claiming to represent the Lord today. How often do we make judgments based on appearance rather than on the how they rightly divide the word of God? Today that appearance includes more than just one's physical persona; it includes the aura and atmosphere in which one presents himself. How often do we tend to think that wealth and fame equate to God's stamp of approval? Are we drawn towards those who share what we want to hear and exemplify what we want to emulate? Those who will affirm us in our sins and weaknesses rather than identify sin and challenge us to repent and be obedient to Christ?

2Cor. 10:8 For though I should boast somewhat more of our authority, which the Lord hath given us for edification, and not for your destruction, I should not be ashamed:

2Cor. 10:9 That I may not seem as if I would terrify you by letters.

I really liked the wording of the NLT for these verses: "*I may seem to be boasting too much about the authority given to us by the Lord. But this authority is to build you up, not to tear you down. And I will not be put to shame by having my work among you destroyed. Now this is not just an attempt to frighten you by my letters.*"

Paul is basically saying that he is so clear in declaring that his authority in ministry came directly from the Lord so as to establish a strong foundation for the truth he is declaring. He wants to encourage them in obeying the truth declared in scripture. He is motivated by a desire to protect them from the consequences of sin and disobedience—not a desire to browbeat them. This ties in with his intent as declared in the opening verses of this letter.

2 Corinthians 1:24 *“But that does not mean we want to tell you exactly how to put your faith into practice. We want to work together with you so you will be full of joy as you stand firm in your faith.”* (I liked the wording of the NLT.)

Paul’s intent is to edify the body of believers, to encourage them and strengthen them in their faith.

2Cor. 10:10 *For his letters, say they, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible.*

2Cor. 10:11 *Let such an one think this, that, such as we are in word by letters when we are absent, such will we be also in deed when we are present.*

The charge against Paul by some is that though he speaks boldly and powerfully in his letters, he makes a far weaker, impotent presentation in person. It’s like saying his growl is a lot worse than his bite. Paul is going on notice to those making these accusations that when he comes, he will be just as bold and powerful in person regarding the truth of his message.

2Cor. 10:12 ¶ *For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.*

Again, I think the NLT expresses this verse more clearly: *“Oh, don’t worry; I wouldn’t dare say that I am as wonderful as these other men who tell you how important they are! But they are only comparing themselves with each other, and measuring themselves by themselves. What foolishness!”*

And therein lies a major point of consideration regarding the teachers of today. So many in the church are content to measure themselves against one another without consideration of how they measure up to the truth of God’s word and the standard exemplified by Christ as recorded in that word. Paul declares this to be foolishness. His only concern is how he measures up before the Lord that commissioned him as His apostle. He is not concerned about being politically correct and/or appealing to the masses based on what they want to hear rather than what they need to hear.

2Cor. 10:13 *But we will not boast of things without our measure, but according to the measure of the rule which God hath distributed to us, a measure to reach even unto you.*

Paul is declaring that he is going to confine his conversation to things pertaining to his own ministry within the parameters of God’s commission. It’s not his intent to compare his ministry with that of others. His focus at this point concerns his ministry to the church at Corinth.

2Cor. 10:14 *For we stretch not ourselves beyond our measure, as though we reached not unto you: for we are come as far as to you also in preaching the gospel of Christ:*

Paul is reminding the Corinthians that his team was the first to present the gospel of Christ to them. That fact established the church at Corinth within his field of spiritual authority. They were not interfering in the work of another man's ministry. Paul was also clear on this principle of his ministry in his letter to the Romans.

Romans 15:20 "Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation:"

From my perspective, it seems as though the early church leaders recognized Paul as the Apostle especially commissioned by the Lord to minister to the Gentiles. It would seem that he would have been within his parameters to give input regarding any and/or all of the Gentile churches. It seems, however, that he was content to limit his focus to those groups of believers in whom he had personal investment or who sought his advice. He was not out for personal glory; he was focused on serving his Savior.

**2Cor. 10:15 Not boasting of things without *our* measure, *that is*, of other men's labours; but having hope, when your faith is increased, that we shall be enlarged by you according to our rule abundantly,
2Cor. 10:16 To preach the gospel in the *regions* beyond you, *and* not to boast in another man's line of things made ready to our hand.**

These verses continue to affirm the comments to the previous verse. Paul knows that he is within his apostolic authority regarding his ministry in Corinth. He is looking forward to their spiritual growth and the ability to realize even more fruit from his ministry among the Corinthians. He is expecting the outreach of the church at Corinth to grow and his ministry oversight to increase in accordance with that growth.

The first part of verse 15 is a direct rebuke of those that were attempting to destroy Paul's reputation in Corinth with the hope of reaping where they did not sow.

2Cor. 10:17 But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

I am currently doing a study of Jeremiah and immediately recognized this reference from that study.

Jeremiah 9:24 "But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD."

The most treasured possession available to man today is a relationship with and knowledge of the LORD that is evidenced in his life!

The LORD is very clear in declaring that He exercises and delights in lovingkindness, judgment and righteousness. Implied is that He expects the

same from His people. *Lovingkindness* speaks to showing mercy to others and doing good deeds in honor of God. *Judgment* speaks to governing according to God's law. *Righteousness* makes reference to possessing morals and virtues as defined by God's revelation to man in scripture.

This truth is summarized well by the prophet Micah.

Micah 6:8 "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

The Hebrew for *understanding* makes reference to one who is intelligent, prudent, and skillful and lives accordingly. The Hebrew for *knoweth* makes reference to one who has made careful observation and been diligent in his search for understanding.

Paul's ministry was characterized by lovingkindness, judgment and righteousness and gave proof that he practiced what he preached.

2Cor. 10:18 For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth.

Paul again emphasizes that it is only God's commendation of one's service to Him that matters. The accolades of men are so often based on appearance and/or popularity or wealth or fame etc. Frankly, the true assessment of our ministry won't be known until we stand before the Lord in determination of our heavenly rewards.

2 Corinthians 5:10 "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."

1 Corinthians 3:13–15 "Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire."

I also couldn't help but think of these words of the Lord Jesus in connection with this verse. I think they are self-explanatory.

Mark 9:34–35 "But they held their peace: for by the way they had disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest. And he sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all."