

2nd Corinthians Chapters 10 and 11 – John Karmelich

1. We are now starting a topic that covers the last four chapters of this book. The focus of this section is about Paul defending his ministry. If I had to use one phrase to describe this lesson, it is about learning the concept of "meekness". Paul was a meek person and that character trait helped him to properly deal with those who opposed him. The lesson for us is to learn how to deal with criticism and still be a good witness for God.
 - a) Paul understood there were those who opposed him and there were "dark" spiritual forces behind that opposition. The way Paul defended himself shows us by example how we are to oppose those we disagree with and what methods we should use.
 - b) Again, we are now studying the last four chapters of the book in which Paul defends his ministry. My goal is not to give a history lesson, but to learn what are the tactics of our spiritual enemies and how we are to spiritually defend ourselves. In short, we are to act meekly, which is how we fight against such forces.
2. Let me briefly discuss a small controversy over this section of the book.
 - a) Many scholars believe these last four chapters were originally a separate letter.
 - b) The argument in favor of Chapters 10-13 being a separate letter is due to the abrupt change in topics. Chapters 8-9 focused on financially giving. Chapter 10 focuses on Paul's opposition in Corinth and Paul gives his arguments why he is a true apostle.
 - c) The argument in favor of these chapters being a separate letter include the issue that once you make a plea for money, why would Paul keep writing and put down his audience?
 - i) To put it another way, why would Paul spend two chapters (8-9) pleading with the Corinthian church to follow through with their planned donation and then turn around criticize those who didn't respect Paul's authority?
 - d) One of the arguments that this is all one letter is the oldest copies we have of this letter is all "one letter". There is no physical evidence this letter was ever two combined letters.
 - e) Now that you know this controversy exists, you can forget about it. ☺ Whether or not 2nd Corinthians was originally one or two letters does not affect the fact that everything in "2nd Corinthians" was designed to be Scripture and designed for our learning.
3. This leads us back to the purpose of this section of the letter (Chapters 10-13). Paul is focusing on defending his apostleship. Why is that important?
 - a) There were people living in Corinth that wanted Christians to "live under the law".
 - i) Paul's opponents argued in effect, "Paul writes good letters, but he is not that powerful when he comes in person." Historical accounts of what Paul looked like said in effect that he wasn't much to look at and not a great public speaker.
 - ii) The point is Paul's opponents can't argue with his letters, so they resorted to insulting his physical appearance and the fact Paul was not a polished speaker.
 - b) Gee John, all of this is interesting ancient history. ☺ I believe Paul is an apostle. So why should I care what Paul's opponents thought of him?
 - i) The answer is to look at the tactics Paul used to defend the ministry. If one is going to be a witness for Christ, one is going to have to deal with criticism.
 - ii) What is impressive is that Paul focused on the hardships he went through as his proof of his ministry. In other words, Paul didn't brag about all the conversions that happened, but on how he worked free of charge to make a difference for God and all the suffering he had to go through as an apostle.
 - iii) The point is this section of Scripture gives some excellent arguments in how to defend "the" ministry. The lesson for us is not so much about defending Paul but about how to give arguments to support and defend Christianity.

4. Chapter 10, Verse 1: By the meekness and gentleness of Christ, I appeal to you--I, Paul, who am "timid" when face to face with you, but "bold" when away!
- a) Paul's opening point here is that he has the right to come down hard on this church if he wanted too. After all, Paul did start the Christian church in Corinth.
 - b) Paul is indirectly answering his critics who were saying in effect Paul was "timid" when he comes to town, but much "bolder" when he writes. The accusation is that Paul was inconsistent between what he wrote and how he acted in person.
 - i) Paul is responding in effect by saying, "If I wanted to, I could come down very hard in person". Paul is saying he is consistent in his lifestyle and he can act in person as rough or as gentle as he acts when he writes.
 - c) It's probably best here if I define the terms "meek" and "gentle". Since meekness is a key word of this lesson, I'm way overdue to define that term. ☺
 - i) The idea of "meekness" is to have power, but have it under control. It is like a trained horse that could buck its rider if it wanted to. That horse keeps its physical power under control and doesn't just use its power because it has it.
 - ii) Meekness has nothing to do with being timid. There is a false view that to be meek means to be passive or never showing off power.
 - iii) When I think of "meekness", I think of being in control. My favorite bible example of meekness is when Jesus overturned the tables at the temple. Jesus didn't start a riot or encourage his followers to do likewise. He made a point and "stopped there". He had power, but it was under control. (Matthew 21:12, et.al.)
 - iv) Another aspect of meekness is when one is focusing on helping others and not oneself. Moses was called the "meekest man who ever lived" in Numbers 12:3. It does not mean Moses was weak or never sinned. It means that Moses focused his life on being of help to others, in particular his own people.
 - d) This leads to "gentleness". Again, it has nothing to do with being weak or being passive.
 - i) The idea is we are to be gentle in how we treat people. To combine this word with "meekness", the idea is we have power, but we choose not to use that power. We work "gently" with people and not exercise the power we have within in to do harm to such people.
 - e) Remember the goal is to win people for Christ or work to draw them closer to Christ. The related idea is to use our spiritual gifts to help each other out.
 - i) Yes there are times when getting rough may be appropriate, but gentleness and meekness is the types of attitudes that win people for Christ.
 - f) Paul's point is not that he acts timid in person in order to avoid confrontations. Paul's point is that he wants his life (and our life) to imitate Jesus' life in every way and fashion. Part of that lifestyle is about being meek and gentle.
 - i) So does that mean Paul should not have come down hard in his letters? No. As I've stated, there is a time and a place to come down hard. The big question is, is one still under control at such times? Paul is claiming that he didn't write his letters out of anger because people rejected him. Paul's anger was "under control" and Paul is simply urging people to be more "Christ like" in their behavior.
5. Verse 2: I beg you that when I come I may not have to be as bold as I expect to be toward some people who think that we live by the standards of this world. ³ For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does.
- a) Paul's doesn't want to be "bold" (i.e., come down hard) toward his opponents. What Paul wanted was a loving relationship with this church. One should not mix up "loving" with being passive. The point is Paul wanted to enjoy his visits with these Christians and not have to scold some because they disagree with Paul's authority as an apostle.
 - b) Paul states in Verse 2 that he does not live "by the standards of this world". In Verse 3 Paul says he does not wage war "as the world does". What does this mean?

- i) The point is the "world's standards" are all about caring for "things" more than God. An example would be one's career. There is nothing wrong with being successful. If one is working so hard at one's career that one ignores God, then that is a sin. If one works so hard that one "doesn't have time for church" or living a life for God than that is an example of living by the world's standards.
 - ii) A similar concept would refer to those who live for other purposes. An example would be people who "live for weekends". These are those who live to go places on weekends and spend most of their spare time and income on recreation.
 - iii) The main point of the "world's standards" is about making one's life primarily about living for things other than God.
- c) How does one tell if one is living for the "world" and not God? The simple test is what do you primarily care about? Another test might be how do you primarily spend one's spare income or spare time? Are we living to make a difference for God or for one's self?
- i) It doesn't mean one can't enjoy "weekends" or "whatever". The question is, "Is God part of every aspect of our lives and are we living for Him or something else?"
- d) The next point Paul makes is we don't "fight" as the world fights.
- i) In other words, we don't win the battle of ideas by outsmarting people. It is never a matter of "just saying the right words" to win people for Christ.
 - a) There is a false view that victories for Christ require special training. In other words we have to learn how to "outwit" people.
 - b) I have to be careful what I say here. There are advantages to learn debating skills and learning how to share the gospel message. I find those things work well when it comes to defending one's faith with non-believers and explaining the Christian view of "things" to nonbelievers.
 - c) The limit of those skills is when it comes to actually winning people for Christ. Winning people over to Christ may be a simple matter of sharing what is on our hearts. If God wants that person saved, it will happen and it is not up to us to just "skillfully" say the right words.
 - ii) Paul's real point here is that we win people over by letting the Holy Spirit "lead" us as oppose to trying to "lead" ourselves. In other words, we pray for God's guidance and then we trust that God is guiding us the way He wants us to go.
 - iii) If we try to win arguments by putting people down, at best all we are doing is making them feel bad. Actual conversions don't come by winning arguments. It comes by helping people see their need for salvation and a need to turn from their sins. It comes by teaching in effect, "Here is what the bible says or here is what Jesus says". We have to accept the idea that some people are going to respond and some people will not.
6. Verse 4: The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.
- a) The "weapons we fight with" are spiritual weapons. The idea is we use the power of the Holy Spirit to make a difference for God, and not try to "outwit" others.
 - b) We win spiritual battles by sharing with people how Jesus has changed our lives. People can't argue with a personal testimony. We win spiritual battles by pointing out what the bible says about a certain topic as opposed to what we "think" is the right answer. One should not expect 100% positive results. Some will simply reject the Gospel outright.
 - c) The next point of this verse is that God gives us the "power to win". Paul says we (that's you and me) have the divine power to demolish strongholds.
 - i) What Paul probably had in mind is that the Roman army spent a lot of time tearing down fort walls used to prevent them (the Roman army) from attacking.
 - ii) Paul may have also been referring to Jesus' statement that for Christians, "The gates of hell" cannot prevail against the church. (See Matthew 16:18).

- iii) The point is if we "fight" the way God wants us to, the demonic powers that resist us cannot win. If we try to "outdebate someone" or physically get in a fight, we will lose the spiritual battle because we are not fighting the way God wants us to.
- d) So let me focus on how we win spiritual battles for Christ:
 - i) We do that by acting meekly and gently. We have all the power of God "within us", but we don't try to use that power to put others down. Yelling in someone's face "you are going to hell if you don't repent" may be a literally true statement, but it does not win anyone for Christ.
 - ii) I have found that some cult groups like to get Christians sidetracked by arguing less important bible points. The key is always to focus on the central issue of "Who is Jesus and was His payment for our sins sufficient for salvation?" If people wants to debate other issues, that is fine, but just know it is rarely, if ever "fruitful".
 - a) I have a friend who is devout Orthodox Jew. We used to debate all the time over bible issues. I finally stopped as I came to the conclusion it wasn't "fruitful". I still pray for him fairly regularly, but I don't argue with him. God wants us to "bear fruit" for Him and that means if some effort is not "fruitful", we should move on to some other effort that is fruitful.
 - iii) The point is we "win" for Christ by letting the Holy Spirit lead us in what we should say and what efforts we should make.
 - iv) One of Paul's points is this spiritual war is not describing a "short term battle", but a long term war where the ultimate outcome is what counts.
 - a) My point here is we pray for God's guidance in how we can make a difference for Him. We study our bibles in terms of learning how we should act in our lives. Then we just "go forward" with those results and trust that we are going down the path where God is leading us.
 - b) Sometimes God is "silent" on what to do next and we just have to trust that God is guiding us in such times.
 - v) Paul is not saying "spiritual victories" are guaranteed every day. Paul is arguing that if we are "lead by the Spirit" as opposed to being lead by our emotions, we are guaranteed the ultimate victory in Christ and in the meantime we will make a difference for God in this lifetime. We may not always know how we make such a difference, but if we seek God, and trust He is guiding us, we will.
- 7. Verse 5: We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.
 - a) This is my favorite verse in the lesson, and one I recommend memorizing. If it is too long to memorize, I would simply remember the last section which is about taking captive every thought and making it obedient to Christ. It is definitely worth learning by heart.
 - b) Before I explain what that means, let me talk about what Paul is saying here. Paul's point is that he is against anything and everything that opposes Christ.
 - i) For example, Paul's opposition is arguing that in order to be saved, one must not only believe in Jesus, but one must keep the law. Paul is arguing against adding anything to the salvation message. One of the biggest mistakes Christians make is we try to do things to please God. In other words we develop the false view that God will love us more if we just do (or avoid) "this or that". God wants us to come to Him just as we are. God wants us to improve our lives, but that is so we can live a better life, and has nothing to do with our salvation or God's love for us.
 - ii) Another example is people can give good arguments why other religions are correct or why their lifestyle choices are correct. The truth is they will still get judged by God's standards for right and wrong no matter how they live.

- c) This leads us back to the "memorization" part of this verse. When a "bad idea" comes in our head, we need to turn that thought over to God. In other words, when something nonbiblical is appealing, we need to mentally place that thought at the foot of the cross.
 - i) Let me explain: When we are tempted to do something that we know God would not approve of, we need to take that temptation and give it to God.
 - ii) When we want to yell at a person, we need to take that thought to God as opposed to lashing out at that person.
 - iii) When we are in "deep pain" due to something that happened to us, we need to take that pain and give it to God.
 - iv) The point is by ourselves we don't have the ability to correctly handle these situations, but God does. By giving those "bad thoughts" to God, He then in turn gives us the strength and power to properly deal with that situation.
 - v) What is not in that verse, but I still recommend if possible, is if we can, turn to the bible to replace those "bad thoughts" with God's word. I have found that putting "positive God ordained thoughts" in our head helps us with those bad thoughts.
8. Verse 6: And we will be ready to punish every act of disobedience, once your obedience is complete.
- a) Whenever a sentence begins with "and", one should go back to the previous verse and see what the "and" connects to: In this case it is about giving every thought to God.
 - b) So if we give every thought to God, what is Verse 6 saying? The point is God works through us to clean up the thoughts and acts of disobedience to Him.
 - i) Let me put it another way: God loves us too much to leave us alone. If we are doing something that is not pleasing to Him, He has this way of working "in us" to change us to be more obedient. It may be as simple as God making us recognize some sinful act in our life and confessing that as sin.
 - ii) The point is real change occurs when we realize God was right and we are wrong in some particular situation. If we desire to turn from that action and ask God's help in doing so, then, over time God will change us to be more like the type of person He wants us to be.
 - c) Getting back to the verse, the idea is every act of disobedience by a believer will be taken care of in one form or another. It may be a matter of changing some aspect of our lifestyle. It may be as simple as a confession. It may be something that happens to us when we go to heaven and no longer have to deal with that sin issue.
 - i) Which reminds me, there is a false concept that God punishes believers in heaven by reminding us of our past sins. The bible teaches that God has forgotten all (emphasis on all) of our sins when we accept Jesus. (E.g., see Micah 7:19). That means He won't embarrass us in heaven with those issues. My point here is once our life is over here, we never, ever have to personally deal with sin issues again.
9. Verse 7: You are looking only on the surface of things. If anyone is confident that he belongs to Christ, he should consider again that we belong to Christ just as much as he.
- a) One has to remember that Paul is focusing on those in Corinth who don't believe in his authority as an apostle. Paul is defending his ministry by saying that he belongs to Jesus just as much as anyone else who trusts in Jesus for his or her salvation.
 - b) The accusation of "looking only on the surface" goes back to the issue that Paul is "timid" in person, but harsh in his letters. Paul's response to this charge is that he is preaching the Gospel truth and he belongs to Jesus just as much as anyone else who is trusting in that fact for their salvation.

10. Verse 8: For even if I boast somewhat freely about the authority the Lord gave us for building you up rather than pulling you down, I will not be ashamed of it.
- a) Notice Paul's strategy is not so much to put down his opponents as much as it is to preach the Gospel truth. This gets back to fighting our wars "spiritually". The "world's way" of fighting is to come up with clever rebuttals to arguments. God's way is for us to focus on the truth of the gospel message.
 - b) Let me give an illustration here. Let's suppose we work for the government and our job is to spot phony (counterfeit) money. The best way to spot "counterfeits" is to spend a lot of time studying at the real thing. People who work as tellers at a banks are trained to spend a lot of time working with real money. That way, it is easier to spot counterfeits.
 - i) The same principal applies to Christianity. The way we spot false teachers is to spend a lot of time with the "real thing". When we spend regular time in God's word, it makes it much easier to spot a false teacher when one comes along.
 - c) Paul says, "I will not be ashamed of it" in this verse. Part of teaching God's truth is not to have any fear of doing so. One of the main reasons we don't share our faith is the fear of not being liked for that fact. I'm not saying one has to preach the gospel in every situation. I am saying when we are sharing our faith, we should not be afraid to do so.
11. Verse 9: I do not want to seem to be trying to frighten you with my letters.¹⁰ For some say, "His letters are weighty and forceful, but in person he is unimpressive and his speaking amounts to nothing."¹¹ Such people should realize that what we are in our letters when we are absent, we will be in our actions when we are present.
- a) Paul is still dealing with the accusation that he is bold in his letters, but not that impressive in person. Paul is saying in effect, "I am what I am all the time".
 - b) It might help to explain some historical records we have of Paul's appearance. First of all, Paul's name means "short", which meant he was short in statue. Our records of Paul's appearance go back to the 2nd Century. They say Paul was not only short, but "bow legged", had a hooked nose, a "big, single bushy eyebrow" and spoke in a high tone.
 - i) My point is Paul was not visual impressive. Unfortunately many or most people are more impressed with a speaker's physical appearance or the "tone" of one's message than what that speaker actually says.
 - ii) God cares about the message and not the physical appearance of the messenger. The point for us is we should care about the "Gospel truth" and not care about the physical appearance of the speaker.
 - iii) By the way, God is not condemning someone who happens to be good looking or a good speaker. Yes, I'm saying that for your sakes, not mine. ☺ The issue at hand is God cares about the message more than the appearance of the messenger. Unfortunately, society does judge us by our looks and it helps to look one's best when one is speaking publicly.
 - c) Paul's final point in Verse 11 is in effect, "I am how I write and I write like how I am". That means that Paul strives to be consistent in what he says and how he acts.
 - i) Yes there are times in Paul's letter where he comes down hard. The purpose is not to put down people, but to "call out sin". Paul wants all of us, including himself to grow in God's grace and that includes teaching us right from wrong.
12. Verse 12: We do not dare to classify or compare ourselves with some who commend themselves. When they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are not wise.¹³ We, however, will not boast beyond proper limits, but will confine our boasting to the field God has assigned to us, a field that reaches even to you.
- a) Let me "translate" these verses: The people who opposed Paul commended themselves. False teachers use human standards for "right and wrong". Paul is saying that if he is boasting it is only what God has done through him and not based on his own skills.

- b) So how did these false teachers commend themselves? Many suspect these false teachers had letters of recommendations from other people. Some suspect they may even have forged signatures of other apostles. The point is they claimed the authority based on the claims of other people as opposed to God.
 - i) Paul on the other hand, was claiming his authority directly from God. Since the Corinthians didn't have a copy of "Acts" handy, ☺ how did they know Paul had direct revelation from God? Paul is saying to judge him by what God has done through his life. Paul is asking the Corinthians to recount the miracles and acts of salvation that occurred due to Paul's preaching.
 - c) Notice Paul says it is ok for him to boast in what God has asked him to do. That does not mean Paul went around bragging about himself and how God has used him. Paul only does this "bragging" because some in Corinth were wrongly looking at human standards as opposed to God's standards.
13. Verse 14: We are not going too far in our boasting, as would be the case if we had not come to you, for we did get as far as you with the gospel of Christ.
- a) When Paul says he "has not gone too far" in his boasting, the implication is that all the Christians in Corinth are not as mature as Paul would have wished.
14. Verse 15: Neither do we go beyond our limits by boasting of work done by others. Our hope is that, as your faith continues to grow, our area of activity among you will greatly expand,¹⁶ so that we can preach the gospel in the regions beyond you. For we do not want to boast about work already done in another man's territory.¹⁷ But, "Let him who boasts boast in the Lord."¹⁸ For it is not the one who commends himself who is approved, but the one whom the Lord commends.
- a) The final point of this chapter is in essence that Paul did not want to take for credit for any work done by other Christians. Paul boasted in what God has accomplished through him, but Paul did not want to take credit for things that other Christians have done.
 - b) Paul was interested in spreading the Gospel message and seeing people grow in their faith. Paul didn't really care who did the work. In other words, it is the results that Paul cares about. He cared about the concept of God getting the ultimate credit and seeing people grow in their faith.
 - c) Verse 18 says in effect we should not commend ourselves. This gets back to the idea of meekness. The point is to care about the results and not who gets the credit. Whoever did the work, the credit should go to God and not the fact that they were used by God.
 - d) This is an important point to teach us believers. The idea is that we should all desire to glory in the work God does through people. Even if God works through us personally, we should give the credit to God and not ourselves.
15. Chapter 11, Verse 1: I hope you will put up with a little of my foolishness; but you are already doing that.² I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him.
- a) When Paul says he "hopes you will put up with my (Paul's) foolishness", what he means is his "bragging" about the successful growth of the Corinthian church. It's Paul's way of saying he wants this church to succeed and trust in Jesus for every aspect of their life.
 - b) The problem with this church is there are some there who are teaching that Paul is not an apostle and in order to be saved, one has to "do additional things" such as keep the law.
 - c) Paul understands that people in this church are saved despite their problems. Paul also understands that these Christians will live forever with Jesus. What Paul is trying to do is encourage them to mature. That means to trust in Jesus alone and not try to do things to earn "salvation". However, it does mean changing one's behavior to live a better life.
 - d) So if Paul's enemies want the Christians to live better in order to be saved and Paul is encouraging them to live better "to live a life that Christ desires", what's the difference?
 - i) The difference is our attitude. We can't show God we deserve to go to heaven based on how we live. We can show our gratitude to God by having a fruitful life.

- e) In Verse 2, Paul says he is "jealous" for the church. The point is not that Paul wants the credit for helping this church mature. The point is Paul cares about the lives of those Christians and wants to see them grow in their faith and trust in God. That includes those who are opposing Paul. A sign of Christian maturity is when you care about the "lost" who are opposing you and not just trying to defeat them.
16. Verse 3: But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ. ⁴ For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough.
- a) Verse 3 mentions that Eve was deceived by the serpent. Let's review that story a little, as it is the key to understanding these verses. The serpent didn't just say, "here's some fruit, now take a bite". ☺ The serpent started by questioning God's command. The lie got worse as the serpent then denied what God said. (Source Genesis 3:1-5.)
 - i) The appeal of the serpent's lie was that he promised that eating the fruit will make Eve more like God. The temptation of the serpent was telling a lie that we can draw closer to God by doing some sort of "act" (in this case, eating the fruit).
 - b) Now let's compare Eve being deceived to how the Christians in Corinth are being deceived. Those that oppose Paul are arguing that one can be more pleasing to God by keeping the Old Testament laws. In that sense, Paul's enemies are similar to the serpent.
 - c) Paul's opposition are saying in effect, "If you really want to be saved, you have to do this or that". The serpent said in effect, "If you want to be closer to God, eat this fruit." The "lie" is that God is not pleased with you just as you are (assuming one is saved). The "lie" is that but somehow we have to earn our salvation.
 - i) Again I can't stress enough that living a "good life for God" does not make us "better" in God's sight. Living a better life for God helps us to "Live a better life", but it has no bearing upon our salvation. Living for God in this life will earn us rewards in heaven and help us appreciate the next life "more", but it has nothing to do with the entrance requirements into heaven.
 - d) Getting back to the verses, this is what Paul meant by "preaching another Jesus". Paul did not mean there was another person who "looked like Jesus". ☺ The point is those who preach lies will deny who Jesus is or deny His purpose for dying on the cross.
 - i) Here's an example: What the Mormon's and Jehovah's Witnesses have in common is they both deny that Jesus is God and deny that Jesus' sin payment alone is adequate for salvation. Mormon's argue that salvation requires being a member of their church and Jehovah's Witnesses argue that one has to earn salvation by being a witness for God.
 - ii) In other words, the problems Paul faced are still around today. There are many groups today that preach "another Jesus" not by denying his existence, but by denying who He is and what was His role and function for our salvation.
17. Verse 5: But I do not think I am in the least inferior to those "super-apostles." ⁶ I may not be a trained speaker, but I do have knowledge. We have made this perfectly clear to you in every way.
- a) Paul has a "double-purpose" here. Yes, he wants the believers in Corinth to understand who was Jesus and what was his purpose. At the same time Paul is trying to establish himself as an apostle. Paul is saying he is not "super-duper" (see the end of Verse 5) like those with great speaking ability to preach some other (false) message of salvation.
 - b) This gets back to the issue of "meekness". Paul is not interested in raising himself above other Christians for the sake of his ego. Paul is simply trying to get people to understand the truth about Jesus and what he did.

- c) Paul's next point in Verse 5 is that he is not a "trained speaker". Paul does not deny the fact he is not much of a public speaker or much to look at. That does not deny the fact that he has speaks the "Gospel truth" about Jesus.
 - d) By the way, the fact that Paul was not a "great speaker" should be encouragement to anyone and everyone who teaches the bible. Look at how much of a difference Paul made in the world and at the same time, Paul admits he is not a great public speaker.
 - i) In other words, it is not our great ability to communicate that wins people for the Gospel message, but only the fact that God works in people's hearts.
 - ii) I remember Chuck Swindoll's comment (he's a fairly famous preacher) on the first time he heard the evangelist Billy Graham speak. Chuck thought Billy's speech was "adequate at best". Yet when Chuck looked around where he was sitting, everyone was gone as they all responded to Billy Graham's salvation call. My point is it is not our ability to be a great speaker than counts, but the fact we are willing to let God work through us to make a difference for Him.
18. Verse 7: Was it a sin for me to lower myself in order to elevate you by preaching the gospel of God to you free of charge? ⁸ I robbed other churches by receiving support from them so as to serve you. ⁹ And when I was with you and needed something, I was not a burden to anyone, for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied what I needed. I have kept myself from being a burden to you in any way, and will continue to do so.
- a) Paul is saying in effect he "didn't pass the plate around" in Corinth. ☺ In other words, he never took up a collection for himself and was dependant upon a donation from churches in the Macedonia region (north of Corinth) for his financial support.
 - b) Is Paul saying this to make them feel guilty? No. Paul is saying this as a lot of people don't respect public speakers unless they know they are getting paid for it.
 - i) Think about professional musicians. In life, we generally have more respect for musicians to charge an admission fee to see them perform than musician(s) who just sets up on a street corner. If we knew nothing about either set of musician(s), we would assume the one who charges admission have more talent.
 - ii) That is the type of problem Paul had as a lack of respect. Because he didn't "pass the plate" asking for donations, people thought he must not be that good.
 - c) On a similar note, in all my years of going to church, I only knew of one pastor who had the guts to never pass the plate around as he didn't want people to think he was doing it for the money. Personally I don't have a problem with asking for donations at church. As long as people understand they are not forced to pay, it is acceptable.
 - d) Paul's point is that he preached free of charge so people wouldn't think he was preaching for the money. At the same time, it caused some people to think, "Well, if Paul is not charging for his service, he must not be that good."
19. Verse 10: As surely as the truth of Christ is in me, nobody in the regions of Achaia will stop this boasting of mine. ¹¹ Why? Because I do not love you? God knows I do! ¹² And I will keep on doing what I am doing in order to cut the ground from under those who want an opportunity to be considered equal with us in the things they boast about.
- a) Paul is facing opposition who boast about their background and their credentials. In other words, Paul's opposition was claiming people should follow them because they are "somebody" and they stated their credentials to prove it.
 - b) Paul answers that charge by saying in effect, "If I have anything to brag about, it is my success in the church in Corinth." Paul is simply stating his love for this church.
 - c) Paul is saying the way to deal with opposition is not to boast about himself but to focus on the results of how God is using Paul.
 - d) This gets back to my theme of "meekness". The idea of meekness is not about putting oneself down, but simply about putting the needs of others before oneself.

- e) Paul knew he had opposition in Corinth. Paul didn't attack them by saying what is wrong with their theology or their credentials. Paul uses the fact that he started the church free of charge and cares about their growth. The point is the way we defend against spiritual resistance is to focus on God's truth and His work through the church.
20. Verse 13: For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ. ¹⁴ And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. ¹⁵ It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve.
- a) Here is where Paul puts down his opposition as being false apostles.
- b) I want you to think about this: Do false apostles walk around with a badge saying, "Hello, I'm a false apostle, come follow me?" I don't think so. False apostles have no fears of coming into a church and preaching their message. The only way you can tell a false apostle is by the message they preach. That is why I stated earlier in the lesson that the best way to recognize a false teacher is to spend a lot of time studying the "truth". That way, one will better recognize when someone "false" comes along.
- c) Let's look at these verses another way: Could these false apostles (or false teachers) make the same accusations against Paul that he was making against them? Sure. So if both are putting each other down, how do we tell who is right? The issue is to look at what both sides "say" and compare that to the gospel message itself.
- d) Paul is not putting down these false apostles for the sake of putting them down. Paul is making these accusations so the Christians in Corinth will know that false apostles don't wear signs saying we are false apostles. One can only distinguish the good from the bad based on the message itself.
- e) Paul's second point is that "in the end" they will get what they deserve. Since God will judge false apostles, the warning is to watch what people say and judge it by scripture itself. Since the Christians of Paul's day didn't have an organized New Testament, they had to go by what the speaker says and compare it to Jesus' teaching.
21. Verse 16: I repeat: Let no one take me for a fool. But if you do, then receive me just as you would a fool, so that I may do a little boasting. ¹⁷ In this self-confident boasting I am not talking as the Lord would, but as a fool. ¹⁸ Since many are boasting in the way the world does, I too will boast. ¹⁹ You gladly put up with fools since you are so wise! ²⁰ In fact, you even put up with anyone who enslaves you or exploits you or takes advantage of you or pushes himself forward or slaps you in the face. ²¹ To my shame I admit that we were too weak for that!
- a) Paul is saying in effect, "Well, since you like to listen to fools, let me brag about myself so I can show you what a fool I am myself". Yes, Paul is being sarcastic here.
- b) Does this mean that Paul's enemies were claiming they were fools? Hardly. If anything they were bragging about themselves in order to prove they were right. Paul is saying in effect such bragging is a waste of time and is not what God wants of Christians.
- c) One way to read these verses is to compare them to "Paul's own credentials" that he has given so far. Paul said he taught in Corinth free of charge. Paul wanted people to trust in Jesus for their salvation and nothing else. Paul's opponents charged for their service and apparently slapped around and exploited those who disagreed with them.
- d) The point is, "who are you going to trust", someone who teaches you about God just because they love you, or someone who teaches for the sake of financial gain?
- i) There are times where we should work for God "free of charge" if for no other reason, then those we are trying to help won't get the wrong idea about our motivations. If somebody is sincerely making an effort to help us and are not getting anything out of that help, we would take their efforts "more seriously". That too is a sign of meekness in a person.

22. Verse 21 (cont.): What anyone else dares to boast about--I am speaking as a fool--I also dare to boast about. ²² Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they Abraham's descendants? So am I. ²³ Are they servants of Christ? (I am out of my mind to talk like this.) I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. ²⁴ Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. ²⁵ Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, ²⁶ I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. ²⁷ I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked.
- a) Paul is bragging about his "credentials". Since some in Corinth are impressed by people's background, Paul wants to give his to help validate his status as an apostle of God. The point here is the type of credentials Paul is giving is "nothing like" the type of credentials someone would give if they were trying to impress their audience.
 - b) In Verse 22 Paul states he is Jewish. As far as being saved, it doesn't matter if one is Jewish or not. Paul states that between Jesus First Coming and whenever Jesus Second Coming occurs, there is no distinction between being Jewish or non Jewish in the sense there is only salvation through Jesus. That is the main points of Romans, Chapter 10.
 - i) If that's true, why is Paul stating his Jewish background? Since some in Corinth were impressed by "credentials", Paul is (sarcastically speaking) giving his.
 - c) From Verses 23 to 28, Paul lists the hardships he has suffered as a Christian. Note that some, but not all of these things are recorded in the Book of Acts. For example, the book of Acts only records one time Paul was shipwrecked. That one shipwreck occurred after this letter was written. In Verse 25, Paul says he was shipwrecked three times.
 - d) The main point of all of these things is that Paul was constantly in danger for the "crime" of preaching the Gospel. Many times it almost cost Paul his life and if it was not for the grace of God, Paul would have died many times over in his life to this point. The beatings and whippings would kill many people or at least get them to change their actions
 - e) So does this mean we have to "live like Paul" in order to be pleasing to God? No I don't think any human since Paul has had to go through as much for the Gospel and still live to see another day. A point of all of this is we have to (as opposed to "want to") trust God to get us through any situation. If it is God's will for us to live through a difficult situation, then we have to trust that God will provide that way of escape. If God could get Paul through all of "this", then we should trust that God will get us through whatever difficulty we are facing at any moment in time.
 - i) One can think, "Well, I'm not as bold as Paul, therefore God wouldn't want to rescue me from my situation". God loves us as much as Paul and most likely, God did not call you or me to spend our lives going from town to town. God's desire for each of us is different. God is just as likely to rescue us out of any situation than He was for Paul, assuming that is His will.
 - f) Here's another way to look at all of these verses: If one is going to spend any time at all, preaching the Gospel, one will not only get spiritual resistance, but that resistance will work through people who will try to harm us or kill us. There are many places in the world today where preaching Christianity is a death sentence. Even in places where it is legal, one can expect resistance.
 - i) In other words, we know Paul is doing God's will simply based on the resistance he got from his efforts. Like I say, if you don't believe the devil is real, try resisting him! Paul spent most of his life fighting the devil and has the resume to prove it!

- g) Let me talk about these verses from the point of view of those living in Corinth. Paul's opponents bragged about "who they knew" and took up a collection to show that they were professional speakers. Paul on the other hand, gave a resume of "hardships" to prove he was sent by God. A classic joke is Paul may not be approved to preach in many churches given all of his time in jail, but it does prove Paul fought spiritual resistance.
 - h) So what was Paul's secret of getting through all of these situations? It was his trust in God to get him through it. Know that Paul never turned down help from friends or other people in order to get out of difficult situations. In other words, Paul knows that God works through people and Paul would use any and all resources to preach another day.
23. Verse 28: Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches.
- a) What drives Paul is the fact he cares for people's salvation and cares for the growth of Christians in the church. That should be our concern as well. The idea goes back to the point of putting the interests of others over our own interests. Again, these verses do not mean God calls each of us to go from town to town. God calls most of us to work "just where we are" and be a witness for God to those that are around us.
 - b) If Paul had a choice in life, I am positive he would love to have avoided all of these trials. Paul "brags" about these churches not to praise himself, but simply to show how much he cares about the lives of believers.
24. Verse 29: Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn?
- a) If Paul didn't care about the spiritual growth of people who were already Christians, he wouldn't have written this letter in the first place. Paul says he "feels" for the weakness in this church. It hurts Paul when he knows Christians are sinning. The point is not the classic line of "I feel your pain". ☺ The point is we as Christians should care about the spiritual growth of other believers and do what we can to help people draw closer to God.
25. Verse 30: If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness.
- a) That verse is an excellent summary of the last half of this chapter. Paul didn't like to boast about himself as he knows his opposition can also boast. Paul is saying that "if he must boast", it should be in things that show his weakness. In other words Paul does not list the times he talked with Jesus or list all the people he lead to Christ. Instead, Paul lists all the suffering he has been through. Why is that? To show Paul's dependency upon God and to show that he needs God just as much as any other Christian.
 - b) In other words, it was not Paul's ability to outwit his opponents that kept Paul alive through all of these situations, but his trust in God to see Paul through it all.
26. Verse 31: The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, who is to be praised forever, knows that I am not lying. ³² In Damascus the governor under King Aretas had the city of the Damascenes guarded in order to arrest me. ³³ But I was lowered in a basket from a window in the wall and slipped through his hands.
- a) Paul ends this speech with a praise to God and a statement of "God knows I am telling the truth". He then gives one final suffering item and recounts a time where he was rescued from those who vowed to kill Paul by being lowered over the city wall in a basket.
 - b) So why is this one event listed last and is "more special" than all the times he was beaten or suffered from a shipwreck? I suspect the reason is because that this was the first time Paul's life was in real danger just for preaching the Gospel, and Paul recounts it the same way we always remembers the first time they did "something special" in their life.
27. Let me end this by summing up some key points in this lesson: What I want you to remember is not all the suffering that Paul went through or even that Paul argued against those that opposed him. The important lesson is how we deal with spiritual resistance that does come when we are making a difference for Jesus. The way we "face it", is not by our own strength or "cunning", but by our dependence on God to get us through that situation.
- a) Paul showed meekness to his opposition not by focusing on his strength, but by how God worked through him to make a difference for other Christians.

- b) There is no guarantee in life that God will allow us to live through every situation, but God does promise that all things in the believer's life will work out for His glory. What God does promise us is to give us the mental strength to get us through those situations if we are willing to trust Him during such times.
28. Let's pray: Father, first of all we thank you for our salvation. We thank you that You have counted as worthy to spend eternity with You. Help us, to be a good witness for You. Help us to recognize that spiritual resistance will come, but You give us the strength to get us through whatever is the situation of the moment. Help us to know what is Your will for our lives and know that if You have called us to a particular task, then You will also give us the strength and resources to accomplish that task. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.