

## **II Corinthians: Lesson #28: Paul Defends His Apostleship**

### **Notes for Parents to Study with Their Children**

### **For Sunday, August 3rd**

Read II Cor. 10:1 – 12:13 (a simplified explanation of the text is supplied at the end of these notes).

**Memory Verse:** II Cor. 10:4 “For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds.”

#### **Some at Corinth Were Working Against the Apostle Paul**

- Some people at the Corinthian church were telling lies about the Apostle Paul. They were also trying to make people believe that he was really not an apostle.
- They said Paul was really not a good speaker and that he wasn't anything special to look at. They said that Paul's letters sounded strong, but when he was there with them he looked weak.
- These were people trying to deceive the Christians at Corinth. They wanted them to believe things that were not true. They taught things that God's Word didn't teach.
- Some of these people claimed to be just as important as the apostles. They bragged about who they were and what they had done. They bragged about how important they were compared to others. But these people were really false apostles, not real ones.
- These people had not only lied about Paul and pretended to be apostles, but they also did other bad things. They almost made slaves of the people. They ate up all their food, demanded money, mistreated people, and bragged to everyone about how important they were. And the Corinthians were letting them get away with all this.

#### **Paul Has to Defend Himself**

- We don't want to be the kind of person that brags on themselves all the time. They talk about all the things they can do better than others or how many things they have or how many friends they have. We shouldn't act like that.
- But if someone accuses you of doing something wrong, you may have to defend yourself. You may have to tell good things about yourself to try to make them understand that you aren't a bad person.
- In this lesson Paul talks about having to boast or brag about himself. He doesn't want to have to do it. He thinks it's foolish to boast about yourself. But these people are telling lies about Paul and he has to show the church at Corinth who he is and what he has done as an apostle.

#### **Some Things We Need to Know About Paul**

- Paul may have not been very impressive in his looks. He had gone through many hard times. He had been beaten repeatedly. He had been stoned. He had been shipwrecked. He many times didn't have enough food. And he also had physical problems (maybe an illness) that may him weak at times. But how someone looks doesn't matter. He

preached God's Word. God had made him an apostle. You can't judge people just because they aren't handsome or beautiful. The real question is are they good.

- Some of the people said that Paul was not as good a speaker as others. He wasn't skilled in speech. He wasn't as talented as others. But again that doesn't matter. Paul had great knowledge and taught the truth.
- Paul had never asked the Corinthian Christians to pay him to preach. Instead other churches sent him money while he was there. Some of these people who were against Paul had been asking the church for money, but Paul never tried to be a burden to the Corinthians.
- God had spoken to Paul so many times that Paul could have started to brag about himself. He could have thought he was more important than others. Paul said that to keep him from every getting to carried away with himself, Satan had sent a messenger to cause him trouble. Paul said it was his thorn in the flesh. Do you know what a thorn is? It's a big sharp sticker on a plant. Paul is using that to explain that some kind of bad problem was given him. Many people think it was some kind of illness. Paul prayed that this would be taken away, but God said Paul would have to learn to depend on God. Because Paul was so weak, people would see God's strength at work in him.

### **Some Other Things Paul Teaches Us**

- Don't compare yourself to other people. It doesn't matter if you think you are as good as someone else, or even better than someone else. What matters is, What does God think about you?
- The weapons we fight with for the Lord aren't like real guns or swords. We don't fight for the Lord with those kind of weapons. We fight with the Bible in our hands and faith in our hearts. We fight with righteousness. We aren't trying to kill people who don't obey the Lord. Instead we are trying to change the way they think. We want them to obey Jesus. We don't want to hurt them, but we do want to tear down the things they believe that keep them from serving Christ. This is what our memory verse means.
- The Devil is very smart. He tricked Eve into disobeying God. He was tricking some at Corinth into not obeying Jesus. We have to be very careful that we aren't fooled by the Devil. He can make something wrong look as if it is right. We have to be careful to listen to God. The Devil gets people to preach Jesus, but it's not the same Jesus in the Bible. Or he gets people to talk about the gospel, but it's not the same gospel in the Bible. The Devil uses some churches and preachers to tell people things that aren't true.

### **Simplified Explanation of the Text**

#### **Paul Warns the Corinthians About Those Who Were Working Against Him**

II Cor. 10:1-2 I, Paul, make my appeal to you with the gentleness and fairness of Christ. I am the one who is humble when I'm with you but bold toward you when I'm away. But I pleading with you now so that I will not have to be so bold when I do come to you I

may have to be bold against certain ones who count us as if we walk according to the flesh.

3 For even though we do live our lives in the flesh, we don't fight our battles according to the flesh.

4-5 For the weapons that we go into battle with are not fleshly weapons, but they are God's powerful weapons to pull down fortresses, the fortifications that people build up in their hearts to resist the truth. Things that people have already decided that have to be pulled down. All who think of themselves as important and who rise up against the knowledge of God. We want to take every thought captive to obey Christ.

6 We will continue to be ready to justly punish all who are disobedient, once those of you who are willing to practice the truth have completely obeyed it.

7 You still look at what we are outwardly. If anyone is persuaded about themselves that they belong to Christ, they better remember that just as they are Christ's, so are we.

8 For even if I am boasting a lot about the authority the Lord has given us as apostles, I will not be ashamed because I know our authority is to build you up, not pull you down.

9 When I write these letters, I am not trying to scare you.

10 Its been said, "His letters are weighty and strong, but his personal presence is weak and the way he speaks is not impressive."

11 Those who are thinking this way had better think about this: Whatever we are in our words in the letters we write while absent is exactly how were are going to be in our actions when we come there.

12 We don't dare think of ourselves as part of that group. We won't even try to compare ourselves with these who commend themselves. People who measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves to themselves don't understand at all.

13 So we won't about things that can't be measured. Instead, we will boast according to the measuring rule that God distributed to us – a measure that reaches even to you.

14 Because we know that our authority extends even to you, we know that we are not overextending it. In fact, we remember how that authority extended all the way to you when we came there for the first time to preach the gospel.

15-16 We've never boasted about things we don't have a right to measure, such as work others are doing. But we do hope that once your faith grows we will be even more respected and listened to. And then we might have an opportunity to broaden our work even more to preach the gospel in the areas beyond you. We don't want to boast about someone else's realm of work that was just handed to us.

17 So if we are going to boast, let's boast in the Lord

18 For its not the person who commends themselves that will be accepted, but the person who the Lord approves.

### **Warnings About False Apostles**

1 I'd like for you to put up with me in a little foolishness, so bear with me.

2 You see, I'm jealous over you with the kind of jealousy God would have. For I'm the one who joined you to one Husband so that I can set you before Christ as a pure virgin.

3 But I'm afraid that somehow, like the serpent was able to fool Eve with his skillful lies, you might in the same way have your thinking corrupted from a pure devotion to Christ.

4 I am afraid for you because if someone comes there preaching another Jesus (one we didn't preach), or if you receive a spirit different from what you originally received, or if they preach a gospel different from the one you first accepted, you are all too willing to put up with them.

5 The way I count it, there is nothing that I lack that even the greatest apostles have had.

6 And even if my abilities in speaking aren't any more than the average person, that certainly isn't true in regard to my knowledge. In every way that's been clearly shown among you.

7 Did I commit a sin by humbling myself so you could be exalted, preaching the gospel of God without any cost?

8 I robbed other churches by taking pay from them to serve you.

9 And when I was there with you and had needs, I didn't become a burden to any of you. My needs were supplied by the brethren that came from Macedonia. That is how I kept from being a burden to you, and that is how I will continue to do.

10 As the truth of Christ is in me, no one can seal up my mouth from boasting in the regions of Achaia.

11 Is it because I don't love you? God knows that I do!

12-13 But what I do I will continue to do, in order to undermine any opportunity of those who would like to take the opportunity. They boast that they are found doing the same things we do, but these men are fake apostles. They do their work deceitfully, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ.

14-15 Of course, that is nothing to be surprised at since Satan transforms himself into an angel of light. So its no great thing if Satan's servants are in the same way transformed into servants of righteousness. But their end will be according to their works.

### **Paul Explains Who He is and What He Has Gone Through as an Apostle**

16 Now again let me say, I don't want anyone thinking I'm a fool. But if you are going to think I'm foolish for saying what I do, then take me for a fool so I can boast a little more.

17 What I've got to say to you, I'm saying, not according to the Lord, but like a fool to give you the grounds for my boasting.

18 Since so many of these false apostles like to boast about fleshly things, I'm going to boast, too.

19 I know that you are so "wise" that you take gladly put up with fools.

20 Someone comes along and enslaves you, you put up with it. They eat up all that you have and you put up with it. They take money from you, and you put up with it. They exalt themselves, and you put up with it. They slap you in the face and you put up with it.

21 I guess I ought to be ashamed. We were just too "weak" to act that way toward you. But since they dare to boast about themselves, I guess I'll be just as daring (I'm talking like a fool).

22-23 Are they Hebrews? Well so am I! Are they Israelites? So am I! Are they children of Abraham? So am I! Are they servants of Christ? (Now I'm really talking crazy.)

Well, I'm one even more. I've worked harder than them. I've been imprisoned far more times. I've been beaten more times than you can count. And I've faced death frequently.

24 From the Jews I got 39 lashes with a whip.  
25 Three different times I've been beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. On three different occasions I been shipwrecked. I've spent a night and a day in the sea.  
26-27 On my frequent journeys, I've been in danger from floods, in danger of robbers, in danger of my fellow-Jews, in danger from Gentiles, in danger in cities, in danger in the wilderness, in danger in the sea, and in danger among false brethren, through tiring and difficult work, through sleepless nights, when food was scarce and we were thirsty, through frequent times of fasting, in cold climates where we had inadequate clothing.  
28 And besides these things, I face the daily pressure of my anxiety about all the churches.  
29 Who is weak, without me feeling weak too. Who is caused to fall, without me burning with indignation?  
30 If I have to boast, then let me boast about my lack of strength.  
31 The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, who is praised into eternity, knows that I'm not lying.  
32-33 In Damascus the governor under King Aretas stationed military guards around the city of Damascus planning to arrest me, but I was let down in a basket through a window by the city wall, and escaped from his hands.

12:1 Though its not good or profitable for me to boast, let me get to the visions and revelations I've had from the Lord.

2 I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up into the third heaven (whether he was caught up in his body or out of his body, I don't know. God knows!).

3-4 I know how this person (whether he was caught up in his body or out of his body, I don't know. God knows!) was caught up into paradise. There he heard unspeakable words that a human being is not permitted to speak.

5 But I won't boast any more about that man. Instead, in my behalf, I won't boast about anything but my weaknesses.

6 For even if I wanted to boast, I wouldn't be a fool because I'm telling you the truth. I will, however, refrain from going any further -- I don't want anyone to think of me as more than what they see in me or hear about me.

7 And so that I won't lift my self up and become arrogant because I've had so many times that God has revealed things to me, I was given a thorn in the flesh – a messenger from Satan beats me violently so that I won't exalt myself and become arrogant.

8 Three times I have pled with the Lord to remove this from me.

9 And He said to me, "My grace is enough for you to be content, for My power is show to its fullest extent in weakness." That being the case, I'm very glad to boast more about my lack of strength, so that Christ's power can rest on me.

10 So I take pleasure in my lack of strength, when people arrogantly insult me, when I go through distress because I lack what I need, when I am persecuted, or when I am put under great stress in behalf of Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

11 Well, I've become a fool by boasting so much, but you forced me into it. You should have been the ones commending me, because even though I'm a "nobody", I've never lacked even one thing that the most highly regarded apostles have.

12 The miraculous signs that an apostle can do were certainly among you. All the time I kept doing signs, wonders and powerful works.

13 In what way did I treat you as less important than any of the other churches? The only thing I didn't do was become a burden to you by expecting you to pay me. Please forgive me of that "wrong."