

2Corinthians – Week 43

I. Review

A. Verb moods:

- i. Indicative – this is when a verb is used to express a fact or making an inquiry:
 1. Charlie **RUNS** the race.
 2. Did Charlie **RUN** the race?
- ii. Imperative – this is when a verb is used to express a command:
 1. **RUN** the race, Charlie!
- iii. Sometimes, Bible translators cannot tell if a phrase is in the indicative or imperative mood, so depending on the translation, certain phrases will appear different...

B. 2Cor. 10:7 (ESV), “*Look at what is before your eyes...*”

- i. NIV 2011 translates this sentence as indicative: “*You are judging by appearances.*”
 1. With this understanding, Paul is telling the Corinthians that they only see things superficially (they judge books by their covers).
 - a. They were easily impressed by appearances and oratory skills.
 - b. And because of this, the false apostles -- who serve the master of disguise, Satan (cf. 11:13-15) -- have bewitched and confused them.
- ii. ESV translates this sentence as imperative.
 1. With this understanding, Paul is telling the Corinthians to look at the evidence before your eyes!
 - a. He wants them to see that his calling from God is legitimate, which, apparently, his critics have called into question.
 - i. Their existence as a church should primarily serve as evidence that Paul was a true servant of Christ and that the Spirit of God worked powerful through him.
 - ii. And Paul, not his critics, personally nurtured the newly formed church for 18 months.
 - iii. Paul’s authority was not designed to destroy them, but to build them up.
 1. Paul had nothing to do with the problems that were occurring at Corinth.
 2. It was the critics who were weakening the church.

II. Continuation

A. 2Cor. 10:9 (ESV), “*I do not want to appear to be frightening you with my letters.*”

- i. Paul did not intend for any of his letters to terrify the Corinthians.
- ii. On the contrary, his intention was to build their faith towards maturity.
- iii. This was Paul’s overall goal for all those he taught:
 1. Col. 1:28 (ESV), “*Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ.*”
 2. And sometimes, “*teaching everyone with all wisdom*” calls for strong correction...
 - a. Proverbs 15:31 (ESV), “*The ear that listens to life-giving reproof will dwell among the wise.*”
- iv. However, some jumped to wrong conclusions regarding his bold letters...

B. 2Cor. 10:10 (ESV), “*For they say, ‘His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech of no account.’*”

- i. Paul’s use of the third person, “*they*” implies that his critics were the ones saying these things about him.
- ii. Paul is repeating, in greater detail, what his critics’ describe him as...
 1. 2Cor. 10:1 (ESV), “*I, Paul, myself entreat you, by the meekness and gentleness of Christ—I who am humble when face to face with you (weak presence), but bold toward you when I am away (bold letters)!*”
- iii. Paul’s critics viewed his letters, not as letters designed to help the church grow in faith, but as letters designed to scare the church, perhaps, even away from the faith.

- iv. They even went further by belittling Paul’s speaking skills and perhaps, his lack of attractiveness.
 - 1. The ancient Greeks, like today’s culture, considered an attractive appearance to be absolutely necessary for making a good impression.
 - 2. Epictetus, an ancient Greek philosopher, spoke of this in his writings (*Dissertations*, Book III xxii).
 - v. His critics are apparently trying to make Paul out to be an illegitimate apostle.
 - 1. They imply that if Paul is truly an apostle, he would be bold in person as well in letter.
 - 2. But, as it is, they judged him as being a coward in presence and bold in letter.
 - vi. Paul admits that his letters were strong in nature, especially the severe letter:
 - 1. 2Cor. 7:8-9 (ESV), *“For even if I made you grieve with my letter, I do not regret it—though I did regret it, for I see that that letter grieved you, though only for a while. ⁹As it is, I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved into repenting. For you felt a godly grief, so that you suffered no loss through us.”*
 - a. However, the intent of the letter was redemptive, not destructive!
 - b. And what did his severe letter produce in the Corinthians? Godly grief, which led to repentance!
 - vii. And there was a physical ailment that perhaps affected Paul’s physical appearance...
 - 1. 2Cor. 12:7 (ESV), *“So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited.”*
 - a. We don’t know exactly what this physical ailment is.
 - b. Some suggest that Paul may have had an eye sickness because of the following passages...
 - i. Galatians 4:15 (ESV), *“What then has become of your blessedness? For I testify to you that, if possible, you would have gouged out your eyes and given them to me.”*
 - ii. Galatians 6:11 (ESV), *“See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand.”*
 - viii. Paul even admits that he was not a skilled speaker...
 - 1. 2Cor. 11:6 (ESV), *“Even if I am unskilled in speaking, I am not so in knowledge; indeed, in every way we have made this plain to you in all things.”*
 - a. But he was not unskilled when it comes to the knowledge of Christianity.
 - ix. Later on, Paul will continue to destroy the “strongholds” these critics have erected by reminding the Corinthians of the signs and wonders he performed among them, proving his apostleship (cf. 12:12).
 - 1. 2Cor. 12:12 (ESV), *“The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with utmost patience, with signs and wonders and mighty works”*
- C. 2Cor. 10:11 (ESV), *“Let such a person understand that what we say by letter when absent, we do when present.”*
- i. Paul dismantles the “stronghold” that he is a coward when present.
 - 1. Paul hopes for a peaceful visit (13:10).
 - 2. Paul does not want to be bold with them, throwing his apostolic weight around.
 - 3. When he first preached at Corinth, he did it in weakness, fear and much trembling (1Cor. 2:2) and he wants to continue to minister to them in this manner.
 - 4. He does not want to show boldness to the Corinthians when he comes (cf. 2Cor. 10:2), but he will be as strong as his letters if he has to be.
 - 5. And he will definitely be weighty and strong with his contenders when he arrives (2Cor. 10:2b).