

2Corinthians – Week 44

I. Review: 2Cor. 10:9-11

- A. Paul did not intend for any of his letters to terrify the Corinthians.
- B. His intention was to build their faith towards maturity.
- C. However, his critics jumped to wrong conclusions regarding his bold letters...
 - i. They 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.
 - ii. They even went further to criticize his speaking skills along with what seems to be a weak and timid appearance (cf. 10:1).
- D. Paul dismantles the “stronghold” regarding his letters and presence by letting the church know that just as his letters are, so is he in person.
 - i. Paul does not want to show boldness to the Corinthians when he comes (cf. 2Cor. 10:2a), but he will be as strong as his letters if he has to be.
 - ii. However, he plans to be bold with his contenders when he arrives (2Cor. 10:2b).

II. Continuation

- A. Paul now establishes the proper grounds for boasting as well as what constitutes valid commendation.
- B. He also turns his attention to what the critics are doing:
 - i. They invaded Paul’s ministry and boasted over the fruits of his labor.
 - ii. They have commended themselves while speaking negatively of Paul’s authority.
- C. 2Cor. 10:12 (ESV), “*Not that we dare to classify or compare ourselves with some of those who are commending themselves. But when they measure themselves by one another and compare themselves with one another, they are without understanding.*”
 - i. Keep in mind that whenever Paul uses the third person, he is referring to the critics:
 - 1. In their scheme to undermine Paul’s influence in Corinth and promote their own influence, not only did the critics accuse Paul of having boldness in his letters but no boldness in person (v. 10:10), they would use tactics common to the ancient world as today: Comparing oneself to another!
 - a. In the competition for followers (very much like today), a speaker had to advertise himself publicly with praise while debunking the qualities of other contenders for honor.
 - b. People were constantly competing with others to gain glory and honor.
 - c. Such tactics encouraged outward expressions of pride and arrogance.
 - d. Self-boasting was considered an act of honor because an individual’s worth was dependent on his ability to project himself.
 - e. Therefore, boasting about one’s achievements and comparing oneself against another were done to gain followers. You see this even today in the political arena.
 - f. When comparing oneself to another, one would amplify one’s good deed and another’s bad deeds to show superiority.
 - 2. Paul lumps his critics with this crowd of frauds who can be identified by their self-commendation and their debasement of others.
 - a. One thing that Paul was not bold enough to do was to do as his critics do!
 - 3. Paul also shows to the Corinthians that trying to make one better than the other is something totally inappropriate for ministers of God to do!
 - a. Paul calls such people as being “*without understanding*” or “fools,” as we shall see in chapter 11.
 - b. The only thing a minister of God can boast about himself is in his weakness (cf. 11:30).

- D. 2Cor. 10:13-14 (ESV), “*But we will not boast beyond limits, but will boast only with regard to the area of influence God assigned to us, to reach even to you. ¹⁴For we are not overextending ourselves, as though we did not reach you. For we were the first to come all the way to you with the gospel of Christ.*”**
- i. Paul did not go beyond his God-assigned ministry, which was to preach to the Gentiles (cf. Acts 9:15; Rom. 1:5; cf. Gal. 2:9).**
 - ii. He made it his goal to do pioneer work, that is, to go where Christ had not yet been preached.**
 - 1. He did not make it his ambition to go where a fellow minister of the gospel was at work (Romans 15:20).**
 - 2. Corinth was one of those places where Christ had not yet been preached.**
 - iii. In 1Cor. 3:9, Paul addressed the church at Corinth as God’s Field.**
 - 1. Paul planted and God gave the increase (1Cor. 3:6).**
 - 2. The success of Paul’s missionary work at Corinth was proof that God had approved of his work.**
 - 3. He did not overextend his authority by coming to Corinth.**
 - 4. And unlike his critics, who boasted in themselves, Paul’s boast was based on God’s work in bringing the Gentiles to obedience through his ministry (cf. Romans 15:17-18a).**
 - 5. While his critics might point to their letters of commendation, their skillful speech and their accomplishments, Paul appeals to the Corinthians of their conversion under his preaching.**
 - 6. Paul’s critics not only wrongfully invaded his area of influence; they tried to discredit Paul and to take credit for what God has done through him...**
- E. 2Cor. 10:15-16 (ESV), “*We do not boast beyond limit in the labors of others. But our hope is that as your faith increases, our area of influence among you may be greatly enlarged, ¹⁶so that we may preach the gospel in lands beyond you, without boasting of work already done in another’s area of influence.*”**
- i. Again, Paul does not boast in the labors of others (as these critics do) because Paul does not work in fields where others have planted (cf. Romans 15:20).**
 - ii. He merely boasts in the work he did under God’s commission.**
 - iii. His critics, however, have no problems building on someone else’s foundation or claiming an equal, if not greater, authority over a congregation they had not planted.**
 - iv. Neither did these critics do anything to expand the field of God’s work!**
 - 1. This should come to no surprise: critics tend to gain influence over believers as opposed to making disciples of non-believers.**
 - 2. However, Paul has hope on seeing the Corinthians grow in Christlikeness and in conversions.**
 - 3. Paul knew that if he has to constantly put out fires at Corinth, he cannot move to new work.**
 - 4. But if they grow in faith under Paul’s encouragement, he could move on and preach in lands beyond them, for example, Spain (cf. Romans 15:24).**
- F. 2Cor. 10:17-18 (ESV), “*Let the one 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.*”**
- i. For the second time in his letters to the Corinthians, Paul quotes a paraphrase of Jeremiah 9:23-24 (cf. 1Cor. 1:31): “*Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.*”**
 - 1. This boasting in the Lord has nothing to do with letters of commendation, skillful speech, outward appearances, personal achievements, or comparing oneself to another!**
 - 2. It has to do with what the Lord accomplishes through his true servants.**
 - ii. The one who commends himself is not approved by the Lord but only those whom the Lord commends!**