

Text: 2 Cor 10.1-18**2 Corinthians:**

Opening (1.1-11)

Addressing Corinthian Perceptions and Paul's Ministry Philosophy (1.12-7.16)

Defending Paul's Conduct (1.12-2.17)

Exposition of Paul's Philosophy (3.1-6.10)

Appeal for Corinthian confidence (6.11-7.16)

Instructions concerning the offering (8.1-9.15)

Assertion of apostolic authority (10.1-13.10)

Conclusion (13.11-14)¹

We move now to the final section of 2 Corinthians. Here, Paul changes tone.

In part 1, he is reasoning.

In part 2, he is diplomatically reminding.

In part 3, he asserts authority.

I. Paul's Readiness to Correct (1-6)

In verse 1, why does Paul name himself in the first phrase? (1)

He is giving additional emphasis or weight to what he will say

Whose voice is echoed in 1b, Paul's or the Corinthians?

This is a charge made against him by at least some of those opposing him in Corinth

What does Paul ask for in v. 2?

He asks that they respond now in such a way that he won't have to be bold when he comes (that is, fierce, antagonistic)

What claim does Paul make for his methods in vv. 3-4?

Paul is a man, but he wages spiritual battles in a spiritual, not a fleshly way

What does Paul mean by "fortresses" in v. 4?

The false arguments of his opponents

¹ Adapted from Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003).

What is Paul talking about when he says he is “destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God”? (5)

False ideas and arguments brought up by men who oppose him

What does “taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ” refer to?

Again, it is the thoughts raised in opposition to apostolic ministry

As Paul concludes this forceful opening, what does he mean by “disobedience,” and what by “obedience”? (6)

The disobedience is that of any who opposed Paul’s apostolic authority, but first he calls for Corinthian obedience to him in this letter

“If the church would not stand with him in disciplining his unrepentant opponents, his discipline would not be effective. Unless any church as a whole is willing to support the discipline of its member or members, the discipline that its leaders seek to impose will be ineffective.”²

II. Paul’s Strength in Person (7-11)

Later in the epistle, it will become plain that at least one of Paul’s opponents in Corinth held himself out as having apostolic authority. What does Paul remind them of in v. 7?

He reminds them that he himself is an appointee of Christ.

What authority is Paul talking about in v. 8?

Apostolic authority, meant for their good

Why does Paul restrain himself in asserting his authority? (8-9)

He doesn’t wish to merely write bold words and not back them up in person

What kind of tone does Paul have in v. 9? How do we know [see v. 10]?

Paul is sarcastic, again quoting the slanders being made against him

² Constable, 2 Cor 10.6.

What does Paul mean by v. 11?

He wants those slandering him to realize he is quite capable of boldness in person as he is in letters

III. Paul's Right to Intrude (12-18)

Who is Paul talking about in v. 12?

Those who commend themselves

What does Paul say about his own claims? (12)

He isn't being so bold as to advance them

What is the problem with those who are commending themselves? (12)

They are measuring themselves by their own standard. Paul is speaking sarcastically again, J.B. Phillips paraphrases it this way: "Of course, we shouldn't dare include ourselves in the same class as those who write their own testimonials, or even to compare ourselves with them!"³

When Paul talks about the extent of his ministry extending as far as Corinth, what does he offer as proof? (13-14)

He offers the conversion of the Corinthians themselves, as they first heard about Christ through him

Paul is not taking credit for the work of others (15), but what does he hope will happen as the Corinthian faith grows? (15-16)

He hopes that they will assist him in reaching still new territory

In summary, where should any minister look for approval and credit for his ministry? (17-18)

He should look to the Lord's commendation, not commending himself

"All human boasting is groundless because it is based on appearances, not reality. It is also mercurial. When mortals die, their praise usually dies with them. By contrast, the Lord's glory is eternal. The Lord's scrutiny is also far more exacting."⁴

³ J. B. Phillips, *The New Testament in Modern English*, quoted in Constable, 2 Cor 10.12.

⁴ David E. Garland, *2 Corinthians*, vol. 29, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 457.

Men are always subject to the temptation to commend themselves (“I did this, I built that.”) The emperor Julian the Apostate (from Constantine’s family) wrote a book that imagined all the emperors of Rome in a popularity contest before the gods. Some fared better than others, but all were flawed — except, of course, Julian.