

- V. If you were able to write your memoirs now, what would you like the main features of the story to be in order to be remembered as a good witness to Jesus Christ?

#9 A humble reputation

2 Corinthians 10:1 - 11:15

"By the meekness and gentleness of Christ, I appeal to you"

2 Corinthians 10:1

Warm Up

- Compare the following business leaders past and present. How would you describe the differences between character and ethics in each comparison:

Donald Trump vs. Anita Roddick

Kerry Packer vs. David Busseau



- If a genie granted you one, what characteristic of your own life would you want to completely overhaul? Would it be your looks? Your credentials? Your powers of influence? Your intelligence or competence? Something else?
- If you were to be able to choose 3 people from history you could sit down to dinner with tonight, who would you choose? Which of these would be people with the "wow" factor (big on fame, big on fortune, big on achievements, big on credentials, popular)?



A newspaper once had an article about J. Upton Dickson who was a fun-loving fellow who said he was writing a book entitled **Cower Power**. He also founded a group of submissive people. It was called **Doormats**. That stands for "**Dependent Organization Of Really Meek And Timid Souls** -- if there are no objections." Their motto was: "The meek shall inherit the earth -- if that's okay with everybody." They symbol was the **yellow traffic light**. Despite the funny side of this pursuit, their slogan "strong enough to be gentle" comes close to defining meekness. (*Our Daily Bread*)

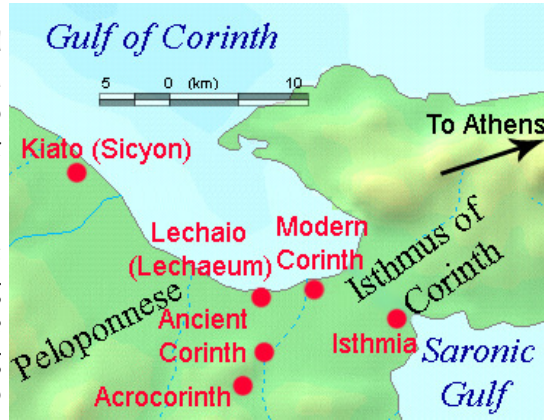
Postscript

Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 10:4: *"The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds."*

Paul's "weapons" are in fact anti-weapons by comparison to the behavior and techniques of his foes. The letter to the Ephesians provides a helpful tutorial on Christian 'warfare'. Read Ephesians 6:13-17. The image is of a Roman soldier during what was known as Pax Romana. All battles had been won. Soldiers were to stand their ground, not as aggressors, but as defenders of a victory already established. This makes sense of why the writer says in Ephesians 6: *"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ... when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand."* (vss. 10,13) Each piece of the armor is a characteristic and quality afforded to Christians by God's grace through Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Introduction

The Apostle Paul had established the Corinthian church early in his mission to the Gentiles in the 1st Century AD. While away on mission to other cities, leaders with false motives and fancy public speaking skills had influenced the churches at Corinth, leading them astray. Paul refers to those intruders, somewhat sarcastically, in chapter 11 as “super-apostles” (11:5). The Corinthian Christians were in danger of being led away from the gospel of grace. In chapters 10 and 11 we learn something about the susceptibility of human beings to the “wow” factor.



Getting into the text

READ 2 Corinthians chapter 10



- a. In what four ways are the weapons of our warfare effective (“mighty in God”)? (4-6)
- b. Upon what basis were some people evidently evaluating Paul? (7,10)
- c. What did Paul say was an unwise practice? (12)

Going Further

- I. Consider the methods some people adopt to persuade a group of people to take a certain path:
Powerful persuasion; Aggression; Threats; Enticements; Bribes; Power; Passion; Visions or revelations; Credentials or letters of reference.

Why might Paul have called such methods “waging war according to human standards” (2 Cor. 10:3)

- II. What two words describe Paul’s alternative manner and approach (see 2 Corinthians 10:1)? How would you describe, in your own words, a person who befitted these terms?

- III. What, in your opinion, makes people susceptible to the methods Paul was critical of?

- IV. Who influences and inspired you in your faith and obedience to Christ? Who is your hero in the church, past or present? Why?

Thirdly, Paul's opponents taught a false gospel, like the

3. **Judaizers** in other cities. In 2 Corinthians 11: 4 Paul states that the triumphalists were preaching "another Jesus"; in other words a message contrary to Paul's gospel. Paul made such comments about false apostles in Galatia (Gal. 1:8,9). In 2 Corinthians 11:22 Paul asks, "Are they Jews?... so am I?" Judaizers in other cities insisted that Christians must also adopt Laws and rituals of the Old Testament if they were to be assured of being sons and daughters of God (e.g. Galatians 3). By doing so, they undermined the finished and sufficient work and of Christ upon the cross for our salvation. They turned the Christians backwards towards dependence on human effort, rather than on God's grace.

In summary, it was leaders with credentials, with sophistication and with convincing schemes and systems that seemed to so easily entrap and derail the Corinthian Christians.

J.I. Packer describes meekness this way: "The meek are those who know themselves to be poor in spirit, who have learned, honestly and from their hearts, to regret all the dehumanizing and subhuman things in which they have been involved as wanderers in this lost world, and who now in humility want only the will of God." He reminds us that according to the Book of Numbers: Moses was very meek, more than all men that were on the face of the earth (Num. 12:3). Moses was no great orator and no great leader by nature, but says Packer, "His meekness was shown in his acceptance of what God ordained, including endless battles with those recalcitrant and disappointing people whom he was trying to lead from Egypt to Canaan, including, even, the enormous disappointment of himself not getting into the Promised land." He goes on to say, "Those who are meek -- that is, prepared to forego the rights and powers of this world, if that's what God requires of them -- will inherit the earth: they will be made infinitely rich in the future...riches of heaven..."

James Packer, Your Father Loves You, Harold Shaw Publishers, 1986.

d. In what area was Paul willing to boast? (13-17)

e. In the end, who is it that is approved? (18)

Paul's reputation was in tatters at Corinth; brought into disrepute by those "super-apostles" who wanted to redirect the faith of the Christians. Paul was considered not forceful enough as a leader when he was with the Corinthians, and yet if he were to write a harsh command to them, he would be compared to the false leaders as to whether he was more impressive than they (2 Cor. 10:10).

f. What sort of orator did Paul think himself to be? (6)

g. How did Paul's "no fee" approach to ministry differ from the "super-apostles"? (see 2 Cor. 11:5,7-11; 12:11-15; 13:3a, 6).



(In 2 Cor. 12:16-18 it appears Paul was even accused of siphoning funds from the collection for the poor behind their backs. If he refused their financial help now, he might appear inferior or be suspected of crafty deceit; if he called for a salary or fee, they might condemn him as unworthy of it.)

Paul was caught in a difficult position: meekness was considered weakness in those days in Corinth; but an attitude of triumphalism was not something found in Christ; and therefore, was not acceptable to Paul.

READ 2 Corinthians 11

- a. What was Paul fearful of concerning the Corinthians? (3)

- b. What does Paul mean by “another Jesus”? (4) Are there examples of such alternatives that you know of today?

- c. How can we become more discerning when listening to Christian speakers, reading books, attending conferences, etc. to guard against being swayed from the Gospel of Grace?

The **wow factor** is spoken of in business circles by consultants such as Tom Peters – a well-known mentor to the CEO’s of the USA. One commentator writes, “The **“Wow!” factor boils down to one thing**: exceeding the expectations of the customer. It goes past great customer service. In short, the basic idea is to bring the element of surprise into your business. The concept of *Wow!* yells out, “Surprise! Aren't you glad you bought from me, decided to do business with our company, etc.!” Putting *Wow!* into what you do and sell isn't very hard, but it is extremely effective. And I guarantee that for the receiver, it is a **MOMENT OF MAGIC!**” (quote from Shep Hyken, CSP is a professional speaker and author specializing in the areas of customer service, customer loyalty and internal service.)



Paul’s Opponents

The first thing we can say about the offending “super-apostles” is that they were:

1. **Self-aggrandizing “boasters”** - In fact, boasting is a word that is repeated over and over in these chapters. In ancient Greek culture great leaders were often known to write their memoirs detailing great triumphs, battles won, great speeches they delivered, accounts of their great wisdom and the captives they subdued. The intruding false-apostles in Corinth seem to have adopted a similar kind of self-praise and list of credentials as the means by which they attracted the loyalties of the Corinthian Christians. By contrast, Paul never listed great achievements to justify his authority over people (2 Cor. 11:16-29). Neither had Paul ever written about great visions of his own grandeur (2 Cor. 12:1-10).

Secondly, Paul’s opponents thought themselves:

2. **Wise in their own eyes** - they liked to be thought of as wise teachers. This theme resurfaces later in the letter, but here it’s important to show that in the ancient Greek world being a wise and knowledgeable orator was a most impressive credential. Such orators of the day were often referred to as “sophists”. One such Greek sophist of the time, Polemon “used to talk to cities as a superior, to kings as not inferior, and to gods as an equal.” (Vit. Soph. 1.25.4)

Don Carson in his commentary on 2 Corinthians 10-12 writes, “In Corinth sophistication was considered a virtue and self-admiration a strength.”

Corinth had congregations conditioned by a culture that expected certain qualities of a leader; qualities that are not preferable for God’s creative purposes. One historian of the time, Philostratus, tells us that “a sophist is put out in an extempore speech by a serious-looking audience and tardy praise and no clapping.” (2.26.3) The Roman historian Tacitus explains “in the scorn of fame was implied the scorn of virtue.” (Ann. 4.38)