

2 Corinthians 10.1-6

“God’s Great News: Merciful and Mighty”

Pastored just 1 Church in USA – 6 yrs in Hawaii – Did NOT End WELL
 Before that TAUGHT Pastors in Uganda for 8 yrs – Most yrs CIVIL WAR
 Few times SHOOTING at Me – Good thing KNEW Where to RUN / Hide

Church LOTS of Shooting – SILENCERS & SMILES – Not KNOW Where Run

Church 500 ‘Members’ when CALLED – Less than 50 Worshippers

Leaders & I decided VISIT Members who Stopped Coming > Learned A LOT!

Write Must-See-TV-Script on THINGS that GO-WRONG in CHURCH!

BOTTOM LINE – MOST were NOT Coming Back – Except Christmas Eve!

BUT Still are Members of Church in GOOD STANDING Thanks Very Much!

So we FOCUSED on Reaching OUT and PREACHING WORD

GREW to about 300 – 3 Worship Services > PROBLEMATIC

Brought STRANGERS into church! NEW & NON-Believers Growing in Word

500 Members BACK – Most by PROXY- To VOTE me OUT of JOB as Pastor

EXILED to Kazakhstan for 11 Years!

This morning we STEP into 3rd and FINAL Section of 2 Corinthians...

As I spent week with my 2 Corinthians Friends – 10 Commentators...

CRITICS of Faith & Scriptures – Many Accusations against 2 Corinthians

SHIFTS in TONE and TOPIC > from SWEET Truths to SHOUTING Threats!

“The pastor ought to have two voices: one, for gathering the sheep; and another, for warding off and driving away wolves and thieves. The Scripture supplies him with the means of doing both.”

John Calvin

We do so Gathered in Friendly, Peaceful, United church – Praise God!

Tell my Little Story – Craziest in Church in ‘self-proclaimed’ Christian USA,

NOT Surprised by DRAMA as New Creation forming in Dark, Hostile Corinth

2 Corinthians		
Paul's Plan for 3 rd Visit to a Troubled Church		
Confirm the Friendly – Convince the Foes		
Chs 1-7	Chs 8-9	Chs 10-13
Change of Plans Defended	Collection for the Poor Detailed	Coming of Paul Determined
Past History	Present Responsibility	Future Opportunity
Christ's Presence	Christ's Poverty	Christ's Power

Paul writing to DIVIDED church, Many HOSTILE to him as Apostle / Authority
 Different OPINIONS about STRENGTH of Paul's FRIENDS/FOES in Corinth

Seems as Step into Ch 10 – Paul thinks MOST Church Stands w/ HIM in Christ
 Paul LOVING Spiritual Father / Faithful Apostle / Zealous for Corinthian church
 Ambassador of RECONCILIATION to Warrior Against REBELLION

Having SERVED a VOLATILE Church, I UNDERSTAND those Mood Swings



During 3 yrs of Paul's Service in EPHESUS – New Teachers came to Corinth
 CALLED themselves APOSTLES > OUTWARDLY Very IMPRESSIVE
 Introduced by IMPRESSIVE Letters of RECOMMENDATION

BOASTED of Far DISTANCE & Great DIFFICULTY of TRAVEL to Corinth
 ORATORY was ARTICULATE and IMPRESSIVE – Wide POPULAR Appeal
 Boasted of Dynamic, ECSTATIC VISIONS, and SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCES

CRITICS of Paul had VALID Concerns – esp Corinth CULTURAL Viewpoint
 SMALL Stature – BORING Speaker, NOT DYNAMIC Orator – Few Followers
 Paul REFUSED to Allow them to FINANCIALLY Support him
 For THEM it was DUTY – for Paul it would Allow them to DOMINATE him
 If BLESSING of God was ON Paul – WHY was he POOR Tent-Maker?
 WHY was SUFFERING with THORN in FLESH & Anxieties of ALL Churches
 When Paul was ATTACKED he TOOK OFF and went to EPHESUS
 Then SENT Strong letter of ATTACK from Across the AEGEAN SEA
 Living Bible > “he is afraid to raise his voice when he gets here!”

Now Paul sending what might be 4th Letter to Make PEACE in Corinth...

1. Plea – The Witness of Christ

Paul WELL Aware of CHARGES Made Agnst him & Honest about Weakness
 LEADS Out with SARCASM and IRONY > CONFESSION & Confrontation

v.1 I, Paul, myself entreat you, by the meekness and gentleness of Christ

Paul BEGS Again – PLEADING – APPEALING

“I PAUL” > NOT often PAUL says his NAME in the MIDDLE of his Letters
 REMINDER what his NAME MEANS “SMALL” // fits Meekness, Humility

This was PAUL’S M.O. from DAY ONE – It NEVER was ABOUT HIM...

when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God

1 Corinthians 2.1-5

v. 1 I who am humble when face to face with you, but bold toward you when I am away!

OPPONENTS call Paul COWARD – Letters ROAR but Arrives with WIMPER
CRITICS Who READ this Letter thot it TOO was just MORE Bluster

Indeed, I consider that I am not in the least inferior to these super-apostles. 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. Or did I commit a sin in humbling myself so that you might be exalted, because I preached God's gospel to you free of charge? I robbed other churches by accepting support from them in order to serve you. And when I was with you and was in need, I did not burden anyone, for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied my need. So I refrained and will refrain from burdening you in any way. As the truth of Christ is in me, this boasting of mine will not be silenced in the regions of Achaia. And why? Because I do not love you? God knows I do! And what I am doing I will continue to do, in order to undermine the claim of those who would like to claim that in their boasted mission they work on the same terms as we do. For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds. 2 Corinthians 11.5-15

BRAZEN Apostles that INVADED Corinth THOT THEY were SUPER!

Christians usually grow the way they are born. If they are born in an atmosphere of dictatorial leadership, they grow up depending on man's wisdom and strength. If they are born in an atmosphere of humility and love, they learn to depend on the Lord.
Warren Wiersbe

AUTHORITY Paul Wiolds NOT FROM himself > Apostle of Jesus

We are Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us.
2 Corinthians 5.20

As God's co-workers we urge you... 2 Corinthians 6.1

Paul REPRESENTS Christ because he is LIKE Christ – Meek, Gentle, Humble
Jesus TAKES the YOKE of the Burdened because HE is Gentle and HUMBLE
AUTHORITY Veiled in HUMILITY – He became POOR to make us RICH

v. 2 I beg of you that when I am present I may not have to show boldness with such confidence as I count on showing against some who suspect us of walking according to the flesh.

Paul TRYING to AVOID the CONSISTENCY his CRITICS Advocate

THANK God HE does NOT give us WHAT We DESERVE!

They regarded Grace, Kindness, Weakness, Humility > as WEAKNESSES

Meekness NOT Weakness > SLOWNESS to ANGER

POWER balanced with SELF-CONTROL / Gentleness FORBEARANCE

Paul MODELS MERCY and GRACE >

MERCY – God does NOT give us what we DESERVE

GRACE – God DOES give us what we do NOT Deserve

Mercy and Grace has a NAME – JESUS – HE is Only way to FIND IT

They CANNOT Believe in God, Find Mercy & Grace if Don't Believe in PAUL

ONLY PAUL Represents JESUS to Them: Speaks for Jesus, Shows them Jesus

God can ONLY Pardon US because He has first PUNISHED Him

Jesus DIED and ROSE to give us FORGIVENESS and FREEDOM

For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. John 3.17

...we (must not) evaluate ministries and ministers based on what *we* think is an effective style and appropriate manner...choosing leaders who have a forceful public personality and an 'uplifting message,' since they will no doubt often have a more popular ministry...the assumption is that if God's Spirit is powerfully at work among his people, the church will 'grow' numerically... those churches that draw a big crowd must have a God-ordained ministry! The bigger the church, the bigger the blessing...the pastor must be doing something *right*. It is difficult for us to keep in view that Paul's opponents, with their compromised gospel, were very appealing because of their personal strength and powerful public speaking. Scott Hafemann

2. Power – The Word of Christ

MEEKNESS & HUMILITY Motivate Paul to TAKE STRONG ACTION

vs. 3,4 For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds.

Paul NOT referring to his own Private Struggle of his THOUGHT LIFE

NOT Struggling with WORRY or TEMPTATIONS

NOT a CRITICISM of PHILOSOPHY or of INTELLECTUAL PURSUITS

SELF-Defense NOT Expression of his HURT EGO > but Message of Gospel

Primary Ref to FALSE Teachers who have INVADED Corinthian church

Not about OBEYING Paul but LORD JESUS and CROSS Paul PREACHED

EVALUATING them in View of CROSS and RESURRECTION of JESUS

20 X's in Final 4 Chapters – 10-13 – Paul uses word BOAST / GLORY

NOT Bragging about himself – GIVING All HONOR & GLORY to JESUS

NOT Personality Contest btwn Paul & Newly Arrived Self-Proclaimed Apostles

They BOAST of Gifts and Strengths – Paul boasts GOD empowers Weakness

Paul did not pretend to be more than an ordinary man...his 'power' was to be experienced only in the gospel he spoke, not in himself. Paul Barnett

Paul was CONQUERED by Christ – Now GOES to WAR for/with HIM

Here Paul speaks PROPHETICALLY > Judgment DAY IS Coming

STRONG Words NOT to DEFEAT Opponents but See them DELIVERED

NOT a PERSONAL Attack but a PROCLAMATION of the GOSPEL

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Ephesians 6.12

ARMOR of SAUL looked IMPRESSIVE in the Eyes of Men

Human WISDOM – Worldly Entertainment – BIG Organizations – Impress Men

To the GREEKS the WORD of the CROSS was FOOLISHNESS

5 Smooth STONES and SLING were MIGHTY to SLAY the Giant GOLIATH

a. Deadly Deception

Paul's OPPONENTS had DIFFERENT Gospel – even a Different JESUS

I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. For if someone comes and proclaims another Jesus than the one we proclaimed, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or if you accept a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it readily enough. 2 Corinthians 11.3,4

Demolish Strongholds: Picture of Fortified Defenses of Enemy, Tower Wall

'waging war' / 'weapons' / 'strongholds' / 'every thought'

'arguments and every lofty opinion raised up against the knowledge of God'

BAD Ideas have BAD Consequences > LIES can send People to HELL!

NOTHING NEW – Old as EDEN > Serpent: DID GOD REALLY SAY THAT!

SAME LYING Creature later DARED Jesus: "If YOU Really are Son of God"

You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies. John 8.44

Gospel WORKER Demolishes ARGUMENTS and PRETENSIONS

What HINDERS True Faith > Pride, False Teaching, Empty Philosophy

b. Transforming Truth

v. 5 We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ,

Once DESTROYS Enemy DEFENSES > Takes EVERY Thought CAPTIVE

Paul wants to DESTROY their SELF-CONFIDENCE > TRUST in MAN Alone
Christ must REIGN Supreme in our MINDS

GOD must WIN the Battle – it is NOT Intellectual BUT SPIRITUAL
POWER of the Spirit can ALONE transform LIVES

HOW does Paul Demolish Arguments by PREACHING & LIVING the Gospel
HUMBLE Son of God had More POWER than Alliance of PILATE & HEROD
ROME Murdered ALL Apostles – WORD of Apostles brought ROME to END

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. Psalm 1.1,2

His Emotion is DEEP because he's AWARE that TIME is RUNNING OUT
Paul has POWER that leads to REPENTANCE > SAVED from WRATH of God

WEAPONS: Holy Spirit – Sincere Love – Righteousness – Faith – Salvation
Church > Rigorous Theological Foundations & Intellectual Credibility

The truth of the gospel will overcome anything or anyone standing in its way...
The ultimate weapon of his warfare is not to compare personalities and passions, expertise or experiences, but to challenge the Corinthians to examine the work of God in history... God makes known the power of the Spirit through the gospel.

Scott Hafemann

POWER of BOMBS – MIDDLE EAST to BLOODY DUST
 KILL Every Living Thing – Bomb cannot CHANGE HEART or MIND
 GREATER POWER of Gospel -SIMPLE WORD
 NON-INVASIVE SURGERY – NO BLOOD, NO SCARS
 OLD IS REMOVED – NEW HAS COME – NEW CREATION
 LIFE and LIP – WALK and TALK

“Once the walls of the mind have been torn down, the door to the heart can be opened.”
 Warren Wiersbe

Like Paul, we are so to proclaim Jesus Christ as the Son of God, as crucified to save sinners, as Lord and as judge...preaching, whether based on the New Testament or the Old Testament, whether exegetical or thematic, fails at its most critical point if it does not on every occasion bring the claims of the Lordship of Christ and his saving power into clearest focus.
 Paul Barnett

3. Punishment – The Winnowing of Christ

v. 6 being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete

Paul continues with MILITARY Theme > COURT Martial is COMING

FINAL Disobedience against GOSPEL invites ETERNAL Judgment

Paul, Christ's APOSTLE, ADMINISTER what Jesus Promised Many Times

Jesus: “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”
 Matthew 16.19

KING will Separate Sheep/Goats, Weed/Wheat, One Taken/One Left Behind

5 Virgins are PREPARED with their OIL – 5 were Caught UNPREPARED

We SIT here this MORNING – Friends from Many Nations

ONE DAY Jesus Christ will WINNOW > Coming to EARTH to SEPARATE

DIFFERENCE Not – Citizenship, Culture, Color of SKIN >> CHRIST Himself

DO YOU KNOW HIM? DO YOU LOVE HIM? DO YOU SERVE HIM?

NOT asking Do You RESPECT Him? Appreciate? Acknowledge? Give Offering

Seek FIRST Kingdom of God and His Righteousness

Have NO OTHER gods BEFORE Me – He is LORD of ALL or Not Lord AT All

Everyone in Corinthian Church called themselves FOLLOWERS of WAY

Jesus meant SOMETHING to ALL of Them

Paul says He is COMING for those HE MEANS Everything To

1. “when your obedience is complete” – Punishment NOT Indiscriminate

TIME will be Given for REPENTANCE and RETURN to be Right w/ GOD

2. “when your obedience is complete” – EXPECTS their Repentance

TRUSTING God to bring HIS Good Work IN THEM to Completion

APOSTLE of Christ is COMING and will BRING the Judgment of Christ

Confident WHEN Corinthians receive this REBUKE they will REPENT/Return

GIVE God their FUNDS and GIVE UP ON their FALSE Teachers

Paul will PUNISH those who REMAIN in REBELLION

Only WHEN Repentant have COME On to SIDE of Paul

For I was not at all inferior to these super-apostles, even though I am nothing. The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with utmost patience, with signs and wonders and mighty works. 2 Corinthians 12.11,12

vs. 3-5 For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ

EXACTLY HOW do we DO This – Shouting? Fighting? Winning Arguments?
 POWER is Not US – Our INTELLECT, REASONING, VOLUME of VOICE
 POWER is Him who ROSE from DEAD, HE Alone can Raise Dead – New Life
 OUR JOB is be TRUE – Faithful to Scripture, Filled w/ Spirit – Truth in Love

One of GREATEST English Speaking Preachers > led to X by one of WORST
 Conversion of Charles Spurgeon > God is WARRIOR, His Word is WEAPON
 I have shared this Story Before – Spurgeon told it Dozens of Times

If you DON'T Know Jesus – May God speak to YOU as he did to young Charles
 I sometimes think I might have been in darkness and despair now, had it not been for the goodness of God in sending a snowstorm one Sunday morning, when I was going to a place of worship.

When I could go no further, I turned down a court and came to a little Primitive Methodist Chapel.

In that chapel there might be a dozen or fifteen people.

The minister did not come that morning: snowed up, I suppose.

A poor man, a shoemaker, a tailor, or something of that sort, went up into the pulpit to preach.

He was obliged to stick to his text, for the simple reason that he had nothing else to say. The text was, 'Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth' [Isa 45:22].

He did not even pronounce the words rightly, but that did not matter.

There was, I thought, a glimpse of hope for me in the text.

He began thus: ‘My dear friends, this is a very simple text indeed. It says, “Look.”’

Now that does not take a deal of effort. It ain’t lifting your foot or your finger; it is just “look.” Well, a man need not go to college to learn to look. You may be the biggest fool, and yet you can look. A man need not be worth a thousand a year to look. Anyone can look; a child can look. But this is what the text says.

Then it says, “Look unto Me.”

‘Ay,’ said he, in broad Essex, ‘many of ye are looking to yourselves. No use looking there. You’ll never find comfort in yourselves.’

Then the good man followed up his text in this way:

‘Look unto Me: I am sweating great drops of blood.

Look unto Me; I am hanging on the Cross.

Look: I am dead and buried.

Look unto Me; I rise again.

Look unto Me; I ascend; I am sitting at the Father’s right hand.

O, look to Me! Look to Me!’

When he had got about that length, and managed to spin out ten minutes, he was at the length of his tether.

Then he looked at me under the gallery, and I daresay, with so few present, he knew me to be a stranger.

He then said, ‘Young man, you look very miserable.’

Well, I did; but I had not been accustomed to have remarks made on my personal appearance from the pulpit before. However, it was a good blow struck.

He continued: ‘And you will always be miserable—miserable in life and miserable in death—if you do not obey my text. But if you obey now, this moment, you will be saved.’

Then he shouted, as only a Primitive Methodist can, ‘Young man, look to Jesus Christ.’ There and then the cloud was gone, the darkness had rolled away, and that moment I saw the sun; and I could have risen that moment and sung with the most enthusiastic of them of the Precious Blood of Christ.” *****

2 Corinthians 10.¹I, Paul, myself entreat you, by the meekness and gentleness of Christ—I who am humble when face to face with you, but bold toward you when I am away!—²I beg of you that when I am present I may not have to show boldness with such confidence as I count on showing against some who suspect us of walking according to the flesh. ³For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. ⁴For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. ⁵We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, ⁶being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete.