

A Spiritual warfare:

❖ The weapons for attack (2 Corinthians 10:1-11)

- Paul was accused of being cowardly and clumsy in person, even though he spoke harshly in his letters (2 Cor. 10:10).
- In response to this argument, Paul clearly indicated that he felt capable of being as harsh in person as in a letter, but that he would not stoop to using “carnal weapons” (such as authoritarianism, physical punishment, or self-praise), but would only use weapons “mighty in God” (2 Cor. 10:2-4).
- These “weapons” include acting with the humility and meekness of Christ (Mt. 11:29). But they also involve standing firm against wrongdoing, as Jesus did (Mt. 21:12-13), or speaking clearly when necessary. (Mt. 23:23-27).
- Paul's authority had been given to him by Christ, and he would always use it to build up, not to destroy. (2 Cor. 10:8).

❖ The correct defense (2 Corinthians 10:12-18)

- Greek philosophers charged large sums to students who wanted to learn from them. To attract these students, they boasted of their knowledge, their social standing, or the important people who knew and respected them. This was also the practice of the false teachers who infiltrated Corinth. (2 Cor. 10:12; 11:19-20).
- But Paul didn't charge for sharing his knowledge, he didn't present letters of recommendation, and he didn't boast about himself. And he was looked down upon for this! How could he defend himself?
- It seems that he needed to be praised before the Corinthians to be accepted by them. But it wasn't he who was to praise himself (Prov. 27:2). Paul let God be the one to praise him (2 Cor. 10:18).
- If there is anything we can boast about or praise ourselves for, it is knowing God and obeying him. (Jer. 9:24; 2Co. 10:17).

B Dealing with false teachers:

❖ Deceivers disguised as apostles (2 Corinthians 11:1-15)

- Paul desires to bring a pure church to Christ (2 Cor. 11:2). But the church was in danger of being deceived, like Eve, and ceasing to be the bride of Jesus (2 Cor. 11:3).
- What was the real danger? Jews who commended themselves as “great apostles” of Jesus had come to Corinth teaching “another Jesus,” “different spirit,” and “different gospel” (2 Cor. 11:4-5; Gal. 1:8).
- The fact that someone preaches about Jesus does not mean they are showing us the real Jesus, as revealed in the Bible. Their words may be wonderful, but Satan himself also knows how to speak wonders and present himself “into an angel of light” (2 Corinthians 11:14).
- By their actions and words, true teachers teach “the truth of Christ” (2 Cor. 11:9-10). But false teachers, who only feign piety, are ministers of deception disguised as apostles (2 Cor. 11:13-15).

❖ Paul and the false teachers (2 Corinthians 11:16-31)

- What similarities were there between Paul and the false teachers? They were all Jews converted to Christianity (2 Cor. 11:22).
- What were the differences between them? Here begins Paul's madness: “Are they servants of Christ? (I am out of my mind to talk like this.) I am more” (2 Corinthians 11:23 NIV). If those others boasted of having suffered for Christ, Paul was far more qualified: flogged; imprisoned; threatened with death; stoned; shipwrecked at sea; engulfed in dangers of every kind; experiencing hunger, thirst, cold, and nakedness; constantly concerned for the churches (2 Corinthians 11:23b-29).
- And here ends Paul's “madness.” He didn't want to give the impression that he wished to boast about what he had done for Christ. His true boasting (or glory) was what Christ had done for him.
- His true strength lay in his weakness, which led him to depend completely on Jesus (2 Cor. 11:30-31; 12:6-10).

❖ Self-examination and victory (2 Corinthians 12:14-13:10)

- The time was approaching when Paul would visit Corinth. What would he find and how should he act accordingly? (2 Cor. 13:1-2).
- Paul was prepared to exercise ecclesiastical discipline forcefully: to restore the repentant, and to punish the obstinate.
- His fear was that, upon arriving, he would find them in strife and various sins. He feared having to weep for unrepentant sinners (2 Cor. 12:20-21).
- Therefore, before that time comes, the Corinthians should reflect and examine themselves (2 Cor. 13:5).
- Paul, for his part, prayed for them to stop doing evil and to do good, and to be perfected (2 Cor. 13:7-9).