

THE SEAL OF PAUL'S APOSTLESHIP

BIBLE TEXT : **II Corinthians 10:1-18; 11:1-33; 12:1-21.**

LESSON 397 Junior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "Not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth" (II Corinthians 10:18).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

2 Corinthians 10:1-18

¹ Now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, who in presence *am* base among you, but being absent *am* bold toward you:
² But I beseech *you*, that I may not be bold when I am present with that confidence, wherewith I think to be bold against some, which think of us as if we walked according to the flesh.
³ For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh:
⁴ (For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)
⁵ Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;
⁶ And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.
⁷ Do ye look on things after the outward appearance? If any man trust to himself that he is Christ's, let him of himself think this again, that, as he *is* Christ's, even so *are* we Christ's.
⁸ For though I should boast somewhat more of our authority, which the Lord hath given us for edification, and not for your destruction, I should not be ashamed:
⁹ That I may not seem as if I would terrify you by letters.
¹⁰ For *his* letters, say they, *are* weighty and powerful; but *his* bodily presence *is* weak, and *his* speech contemptible.
¹¹ Let such an one think this, that, such as we are in word by letters when we are absent, such *will we be* also in deed when we are present.
¹² For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.
¹³ But we will not boast of things without *our* measure, but according to the measure of the rule which God hath distributed to us, a measure to reach even unto you.

BIBLE REFERENCES:

NOTES:

Heavenly Commissions

One day Jesus appeared to Paul the Apostle in a shining light from Heaven. When Paul responded, saying, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" the Lord gave him a commission, or an assignment, to preach Jesus "before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel" (Acts 9:15).

Jesus appeared to Moses and called to him out of the midst of the burning bush in the desert of Midian. When Moses said, "Here am I," the Lord gave him a commission to deliver the Israelites from Egyptian bondage.

Jesus appeared to Peter and Andrew as they were casting a fishing net into the sea. When they immediately left their nets and followed Jesus, He commissioned them to be fishers of men.

Your Commission

There comes a time in the life of everyone when Jesus appears to him in some form. Has He appeared to you? It may have been only in the still, small voice of conscience, but He made you know that He wanted you to give up your sinful ways; and if you responded as these people did, and said, "Lord, I will," the Lord saved you and commissioned you to do something for Him.

When you have an opportunity to do any little kindness or service for another, for your mother and father, for a friend, for your teacher, for your pastor, remember that Jesus has commissioned you to do it, and it will be a joy to you.

Paul's Apostleship

We know that all the words recorded in the Bible are true; they are God's words. So when we read Paul's letters in which he speaks of himself as "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ," and as in today's lesson, "I suppose I was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles," we know he was truly an Apostle appointed by the Lord Jesus Christ. "For the seal of mine apostleship," he said at one time, "are ye in the Lord" (I Corinthians 9:2). The many people who were converted under Paul's ministry were proof that his call to preach the Gospel was of God.

To Establish Unity

Paul loved the people of the church of Corinth. He had suffered and prayed much to establish them in the Gospel, and now he knew that in his absence false apostles had come to Corinth to draw away disciples after them.

In order to preserve unity in the church, Paul felt compelled to show plainly his position as the true Apostle and minister of the Corinthian church in contrast with that of the false apostles. He wrote beseeching them "by the meekness and gentleness of Christ" to consider his authority.

Warfare

The false apostles considered Paul as walking according to the flesh, or being unsaved. Paul's reply was that though he did have a natural body, yet he did not war after the flesh, or as unsaved people do.

In the Book of James we read about the warfare that ungodly people engage in. The question is asked them: "From whence

¹⁴ For we stretch not ourselves beyond *our measure*, as though we reached not unto you: for we are come as far as to you also in *preaching* the gospel of Christ:

¹⁵ Not boasting of things without *our measure*, *that is*, of other men's labours; but having hope, when your faith is increased, that we shall be enlarged by you according to our rule abundantly,

¹⁶ To preach the gospel in the *regions* beyond you, *and* not to boast in another man's line of things made ready to our hand.

¹⁷ But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

¹⁸ For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth.

2 Corinthians 11:1-33

¹ Would to God ye could bear with me a little in *my folly*: and indeed bear with me.

² For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present *you as a chaste virgin* to Christ.

³ But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

⁴ For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or *if ye* receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with *him*.

⁵ For I suppose I was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles.

⁶ But though *I be* rude in speech, yet not in knowledge; but we have been thoroughly made manifest among you in all things.

⁷ Have I committed an offence in abasing myself that ye might be exalted, because I have preached to you the gospel of God freely?

⁸ I robbed other churches, taking wages *of them*, to do you service.

⁹ And when I was present with you, and wanted, I was chargeable to no man: for that which was lacking to me the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied: and in all *things* I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and *so* will I keep *myself*.

¹⁰ As the truth of Christ is in me, no man shall stop me of this boasting in the regions of Achaia.

¹¹ Wherefore? because I love you not? God knoweth.

come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts [strong desires] that war in your members?" People who are not saved are likely to be selfish. They have strong desires for things for themselves, and envy those who are blessed of God.

They fight and quarrel, and are not happy, because they do not submit themselves to God and ask help of Him. They think it is all right to harbour thoughts of resentment toward people who may not have treated them right. That is the human reasoning which exalts itself against the knowledge of God.

Spiritual Weapons

Those of us who are saved are engaged in a warfare, too, but our fortifications — our weapons — are the spiritual experiences God gives us. The experience of salvation enables us to withstand temptation. Sanctification cleanses our hearts so the temptations are only from without. The baptism of the Holy Ghost and fire fill us to overflowing with the love of God.

These spiritual fortifications enable us to pull down the strongholds of the devil. We obey the Word of God, laying aside "all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speaking," and follow the example of Jesus, "who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously" (I Peter 2:1, 23).

Capturing Thoughts

The Bible says of man, "As he thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Proverbs 23:7). We all want to be good Christians — boys and girls in whom the Lord will be well pleased. Our lesson today tells us how: Bring "into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

Every thought that comes to our mind is to be rejected or entertained, according to whether it is pleasing to Jesus. If it is an evil thought, an unkind or critical thought, it should be rejected; and in its place should be planted a pure thought, a lovely thought, a thought of good report, as the Bible tells us to do (**Philippians 4:8** ⁸ Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.).

Simplicity of Christ

The people of Corinth saw the good outward appearance of the false apostles, but God saw Paul's faithful heart, his real concern for the people. Paul was jealous over them with a godly jealousy. He wanted them to be truly sanctified so they could be with him in the First Resurrection — the blessedness of being united with Christ when He would come for His own.

Paul feared lest they should be beguiled or deceived by the subtle tricks of the devil, trying to divert their minds from simple obedience to Christ. Would the teachings of the false apostles seem better to them than Paul's preaching?

False Accusations

The false apostles had to admit that Paul's letters were weighty and powerful, but said, "His bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible." But what was the evident truth? The influence of Paul's presence in Corinth was so very strong that his preaching of the Gospel was the foundation of their faith. His speech was so very forceful that when he was in Athens, Paul was invited to speak on Mars' Hill, the highest court of the city. When he appeared before King Agrippa, the king trembled under Paul's preaching, saying, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian" (Acts 26:28).

¹² But what I do, that I will do, that I may cut off occasion from them which desire occasion; that wherein they glory, they may be found even as we.

¹³ For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.

¹⁴ And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.

¹⁵ Therefore *it is* no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.

¹⁶ I say again, Let no man think me a fool; if otherwise, yet as a fool receive me, that I may boast myself a little.

¹⁷ That which I speak, I speak *it* not after the Lord, but as it were foolishly, in this confidence of boasting.

¹⁸ Seeing that many glory after the flesh, I will glory also.

¹⁹ For ye suffer fools gladly, seeing ye *yourselves* are wise.

²⁰ For ye suffer, if a man bring you into bondage, if a man devour *you*, if a man take *of you*, if a man exalt himself, if a man smite you on the face.

²¹ I speak as concerning reproach, as though we had been weak. Howbeit whereinsoever any is bold, (I speak foolishly,) I am bold also.

²² Are they Hebrews? so *am* I. Are they Israelites? so *am* I. Are they the seed of Abraham? so *am* I.

²³ Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I *am* more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft.

²⁴ Of the Jews five times received I forty *stripes* save one.

²⁵ Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep;

²⁶ *In* journeyings often, *in* perils of waters, *in* perils of robbers, *in* perils by *mine own* countrymen, *in* perils by the heathen, *in* perils in the city, *in* perils in the wilderness, *in* perils in the sea, *in* perils among false brethren;

²⁷ *In* weariness and painfulness, *in* watchings often, *in* hunger and thirst, *in* fastings often, *in* cold and nakedness.

²⁸ Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.

²⁹ Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?

³⁰ If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities.

³¹ The God and Father of our Lord Jesus

It would seem that Paul did not often speak as the learned man he was, because he said, "Christ sent me . . . to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect." And in his first letter to the Corinthians, he wrote, "I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified."

Paul No Burden

Paul prayed for his converts and preached to them because he loved them. Though some had come looking for financial gain from the people, Paul worked among them without receiving pay. He worked as a tentmaker when he first came to Corinth; and when he was in need the brethren from Macedonia helped him, so he was never a burden to those in Corinth. He said, "I seek not yours, but you."

God's Measure

The false apostles were measuring themselves among themselves and thought they were doing quite well, but the true measure for anyone's life is the Word of God. Paul's authority as the minister of the Corinthians church was his patience, and the signs and wonders and miracles that the Lord performed as Paul preached the Word (**Mark 16:17-20** ¹⁷ And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; ¹⁸ They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. ¹⁹ So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. ²⁰ And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with *them*, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen). These others gloried in the fact that they were Israelites — children of Abraham — and claimed to be ministers of Christ. Paul gloried in trials and infirmities, for when he was weak he leaned on the Lord and was strong in Him.

Paul was beaten and stoned, was shipwrecked, was in perils in the wilderness, in perils among false brethren, was weary and in pain, hungry and thirsty, in prayers and fastings often, carrying upon his heart the trials of the people in all the churches. If anyone was weak, he felt that weakness. If anyone was offended, he felt the hurt, too.

Commendation

Paul mentioned the glory of God and revelations that God had shown him from Heaven; but in these he did not glory, for he knew that "not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth."

QUESTIONS

1. Why did Paul feel compelled to defend his apostleship and ministry?
2. What did he call those who had come in to draw disciples after them?
3. What kind of warfare was Paul accused of engaging in?
4. In what kind of warfare do Christians engage?
5. Why is it very important to bring "into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ"?
6. How do we know that Paul's bodily presence was powerful and his speech forceful?
7. Why did Paul minister to the people of Corinth without charge?
8. Why is it not wise to measure ourselves by ourselves?
9. What were the signs of Paul's authority as the true minister of the Corinthian church?

Christ, which is blessed for evermore,
knoweth that I lie not.

³² In Damascus the governor under
Aretas the king kept the city of the
Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to
apprehend me:

³³ And through a window in a basket was
I let down by the wall, and escaped his
hands.

2 Corinthians 12:1-21

¹ It is not expedient for me doubtless to
glory. I will come to visions and
revelations of the Lord.

² I knew a man in Christ above fourteen
years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot
tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot
tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught
up to the third heaven.

³ And I knew such a man, (whether in
the body, or out of the body, I cannot
tell: God knoweth;)

⁴ How that he was caught up into
paradise, and heard unspeakable words,
which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

⁵ Of such an one will I glory: yet of
myself I will not glory, but in mine
infirmities.

⁶ For though I would desire to glory, I
shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth:
but *now* I forbear, lest any man should
think of me above that which he seeth
me *to be*, or *that* he heareth of me.

⁷ And lest I should be exalted above
measure through the abundance of the
revelations, there was given to me a
thorn in the flesh, the messenger of
Satan to buffet me, lest I should be
exalted above measure.

⁸ For this thing I besought the Lord
thrice, that it might depart from me.

⁹ And he said unto me, My grace is
sufficient for thee: for my strength is
made perfect in weakness. Most gladly
therefore will I rather glory in my
infirmities, that the power of Christ may
rest upon me.

¹⁰ Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities,
in reproaches, in necessities, in
persecutions, in distresses for Christ's
sake: for when I am weak, then am I
strong.

¹¹ I am become a fool in glorying; ye
have compelled me: for I ought to have
been commended of you: for in nothing
am I behind the very chiefest apostles,
though I be nothing.

¹² Truly the signs of an apostle were
wrought among you in all patience, in
signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.

¹³ For what is it wherein ye were inferior
to other churches, except *it be* that I

10. In what did Paul glory? Why?

myself was not burdensome to you?
forgive me this wrong.

¹⁴ Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will not be burdensome to you: for I seek not yours, but you: for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children.

¹⁵ And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved.

¹⁶ But be it so, I did not burden you: nevertheless, being crafty, I caught you with guile.

¹⁷ Did I make a gain of you by any of them whom I sent unto you?

¹⁸ I desired Titus, and with *him* I sent a brother. Did Titus make a gain of you? walked we not in the same spirit? *walked we* not in the same steps?

¹⁹ Again, think ye that we excuse ourselves unto you? we speak before God in Christ: but *we do* all things, dearly beloved, for your edifying.

²⁰ For I fear, lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I would, and *that* I shall be found unto you such as ye would not: lest *there be* debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults:

²¹ *And* lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and *that* I shall bewail many which have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they have committed.