

PAUL'S DEFENCE OF HIS APOSTLESHIP AND MINISTRY

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

LESSON 397 Senior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "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" (II Corinthians 12:10).

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:

I Paul's Defence

1. Paul sets forth the spiritual power with which he is armed against the adversary, II Corinthians 10:1-9;
Ephesians 6:13
¹³ Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.
2. Paul's opposers said his letters were weighty, but his speech contemptible, II Corinthians 10:10,11;
Galatians 4:13
¹³ Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first.
1 Corinthians 2:3-5
³ And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling.
⁴ And my speech and my preaching *was* not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power:
⁵ That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.
3. Paul accuses them of reaching out beyond their measure and boasting in other men's labour, II Corinthians 10:12-16.
4. Whom the Lord commendeth is approved, II Corinthians 10:17, 18;
Proverbs 27:2
² Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips.
Romans 2:29
²⁹ But he *is* a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the spirit, *and* not in the letter; whose praise *is* not of men, but of God.

II Paul's Suffering for the Gospel

1. Paul is forced to commend himself, II Corinthians 11:1-22;
John 8:44
⁴⁴ Ye are of *your* father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.
2. Paul recounts his suffering for the Gospel, II Corinthians 11:23-33;
Deuteronomy 25:3
³ Forty stripes he may give him, *and* not exceed: lest, *if* he should exceed, and beat him above these with many stripes, then thy brother should seem vile unto thee.
1 Corinthians 9:22
²² To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all *men*, that I might by all means save some.
Acts 20:31
³¹ Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.
Acts 27:41
⁴¹ And falling into a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground; and the forepart stuck fast, and remained unmoveable, but the hinder part was broken with the violence of the waves.

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 throughly 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.

III Paul's Revelations

1. Paul caught up to Paradise, II Corinthians 12:1-6.

2. Lest he be exalted above measure through the abundance of these revelations, he was given a thorn in the flesh, II Corinthians 12:7-9;

Galatians 4:13

¹³ Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first.

Galatians 4:14

¹⁴ And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, *even* as Christ Jesus.

3. He gloried in these infirmities, for when he was weak then he was strong, II Corinthians 12:10;

2 Corinthians 7:4

⁴ Great *is* my boldness of speech toward you, great *is* my glorying of you: I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation.

2 Corinthians 13:4

⁴ For though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you.

Romans 5:3

³ And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience;

4. He received wages from other churches that he might preach the Gospel free of charge to them, II Corinthians 12:11-21;

Acts 20:33

³³ I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel.

2 Corinthians 11:8

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

NOTES:

The Greatest Missionary

Paul was a native of Tarsus, a city noted for its learning. He was well versed in Greek culture and philosophy. He was also a pupil of Gamaliel, the noted Jewish teacher of that day. He knew the Law. All this was not a requisite to being an Apostle but we do believe the Lord used these things, and made him the greatest missionary the world has ever seen.

Requirements to Be an Apostle

There were some requirements the people deemed necessary in order for one to be an Apostle. One of these was that he must have seen the Lord. In I Corinthians 9:1, 2, Paul asks the questions: "Am I not an apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? are not ye my work in the Lord? If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you: for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord." In I Corinthians 15:8; "And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time." Paul tells them plainly that he had seen the Lord.

Another requirement was that he be divinely called. (Paul's call is recorded in Galatians 1:11, 12 - **Galatians 1:11-12**

¹¹ But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. ¹² For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught *it*, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.) Another requirement was that signs and wonders must accompany his ministry (**Mark 16:17-18**

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.) Paul fulfilled all these requirements. He said, "Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all

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

patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds" (II Corinthians 12:12).

Paul preached for a year and a half at Corinth. The Lord worked mightily and a strong church was established. In Paul's absence, the devil had slipped in an emissary who claimed to be an Apostle of Jesus Christ. He was drawing the people unto himself and away from the true Gospel. In order to build up a name for himself, he assailed Paul and put him into ill repute with the church. He could find nothing against Paul's character, so he found fault with his bodily appearance and speech. The enemy asserted that Paul was bold and his letters powerful when absent, but when present he was weak and his speech contemptible.

Paul brands them as false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the Apostles of Christ; and he says it was no wonder, for Satan transforms himself into an angel of light, and it is not strange if his ministers try to transform themselves into ministers of righteousness.

Measuring by Themselves

Paul tells them it is not wisdom to measure themselves by themselves. There is no limit to the height of a man's opinion of himself so long as he compares himself with himself or with an inferior and not with a superior.

Paul calls this walking after the flesh. "Though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds)." He assures them he is coming again to them and what he was when absent he would be to them the next time when present.

False Charges

In order to lead these Corinthians back to Christ, Paul felt he must vindicate himself by facts. He said that boasting is not consistent with Christian humility, but he must refute the false reports that were being circulated.

These false workers boasted of their lineage. Paul compares his own with them and then tells some of the many things he had suffered for the Gospel. As he recalls these hardships, his heart goes out to those who are weak and suffering and he exclaims, "Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not?" Besides all these trials there was that which came upon him daily: "the care of all the churches." He was no coward. He was ready to take the lion by the beard and throw him out. He would not allow the enemy to slip in unmolested and devour the flock. Paul may have been weak in body but not in spirit. He threw all his spiritual strength against the ruthless foe to overthrow him and save his flock.

Other Men's Labours

This false apostle had entered Paul's province and labours and was trying to take possession of them as if they were his own. An old worthy said about such a one: "It is base, abominable, and deeply sinful, for a man to thrust himself into other men's labours and by sowing doubtful disputations among Christian people, distract and divide them, that he may get a party to himself."

Paul never attempted to go where another had preached the Gospel. He went where Christ had not been named, lest he build on another man's foundation.

He alludes to the Olympic Games and declares this intruder had entered the game unlawfully. "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth."

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

Paul's Stature

They who were accusing Paul said his bodily presence was weak and his speech contemptible. An old Greek writer said that Paul was small of stature but his height "touched the heavens." That he had no mean personality may be reasonably presumed or he would never have filled the office he did under the high priest in persecuting the Christian Church.

That his speech was not contemptible we have evidence from the account given in **Acts 14:12** ¹² And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker. - , where the Lycaonians thought he was Mercury because he was the chief speaker. Mercury was the Greek god of eloquence.

Fleeing the Flock

The false prophets were fleeing the flock, and Paul reminds the Corinthians that he preached the Gospel to them free, working with his own hands to supply the need. Later the Macedonian churches also sent help. Ironically, he refers to it as if he had done them a wrong and begs to be forgiven. Did he do it because he loved them not? God knoweth. The more abundantly he loved them, the less he was loved. He gloried in his freedom to preach the Gospel without charge, and no man could take that freedom from him. He preferred to work with his own hands rather than to be chargeable to anyone.

Caught Up to Heaven

Paul proves he was not a whit behind the chiefest Apostle and relates an experience he had with the Lord fourteen years previous. Perhaps all these years this had been a secret between him and the Lord, something too sacred to mention. He discloses it now that he might help them out of the trap of the enemy into which they were falling. He relates that he was caught up to Paradise and saw and heard things unlawful to utter. So great were these revelations that the Lord gave him a thorn in the flesh to keep him humble and prevent him from being exalted above measure. He besought the Lord thrice to remove it, but the Lord said, "My grace is sufficient for thee."

So closely united was Paul's spirit with that of Jesus Christ that he rejoiced in his sufferings for the Gospel. He realized his strength was made perfect in weakness. Therefore he could say that he took pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake.

When trials and afflictions come our way, do we take pleasure in them? Or do we wail and bemoan our fate? Do they bring more of the power of God on our lives, or less zeal and courage to fight the good fight of faith? Paul had found the great secret of the Gospel, and no buffeting of Satan could dislodge him from the cleft of the Rock in which he was hid.

QUESTIONS

1. Why did Paul have to defend his apostleship?
2. Who first carried the Gospel to the Corinthians?
3. Does Satan send workers into the Lord's vineyard?
4. Describe their appearance.
5. What was given Paul to keep him humble?
6. What did Paul's enemies say about his appearance?
7. Give reasons why you think they were wrong.
8. How did Paul get money to preach the Gospel to the Corinthians?
9. Tell some of the things Paul suffered for the Gospel.
10. In what did he rejoice?

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.