

# **Dr. Ayo Adewuya, 2 Corinthians, Session 11**

## **2 Corinthians 10, Paul's Apostolic Defense**

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This is Dr. Ayo Adewuya in his teaching on 2 Corinthians. This is session 11, 2 Corinthians 10, Paul's Apostolic Defense.

We now start our examination of 2 Corinthians 10-13.

These chapters go together as they discuss the vindication of Paul's apostolic authority. Paul will be looking at various areas as he defends his authority. Just as an introduction, think about this.

In an attempt to deride and ridicule the great missionary William Carey, somebody told him that he learned that Carey was a shoemaker. But being the humble person that he was, William Carey told him that he was not even a shoemaker but an ordinary cobbler or mender. So, the point seems to be that an ordinary cobbler was the least qualified to be a missionary.

Something of the same dynamics is what we'll find in Paul's life. A just, common, working man, a leather worker. So why should anyone take him seriously? Talk more about considering him to be an apostle.

An apostle would not work for a living, the Corinthians will say. It should be above that. That appears to be what some of the Corinthians were saying.

An apostle will be a person of dignity and strength of character. But what of Paul? His opponents in Corinth pictured him as so milk and mild, gentle and timid, with no spine, he's a weakling when he's with others, and he's only bold when he's far off, and he's able to fire letters to them. He barks more than he bites.

You see, the false teachers at Corinth have caricatured Paul in this manner. So, starting from this chapter, Paul defends his apostleship and ministry against various misrepresentations by false teachers who have infiltrated the Corinthian church. Some of the false teachers at Corinth who claim to be true apostles of Christ have vilified Paul's authority as well as derided his apostolic commission.

They have mistaken his godly characteristics and misinterpreted his wise purposes. But how seriously mistaken they were. To be me does not mean that one is flabby, indolent or just ordinarily easygoing.

As Paul writes, his meekness was not incompatible with the firmness and reality with which he must deal with his enemies and his readers. So what we see from 2nd Corinthians chapter 10, verse 1, going through chapter 13, is a sudden shift in tone and rhetoric. Here in these chapters, Paul takes up the theme of the legitimacy of his apostleship with renewed vigor.

Now, he turns his attention to countering the personal attacks that were primarily directed towards him by the false apostles, which we look at in 11:13. And sad to say, the ill effects of their influences on the church. You see, some Corinthians have turned against Paul.

So, we find in these sections a very stern note of warning that permeates the passage and is directed primarily toward those who have sinned and not yet repented. As Paul prepares for his third visit to Corinth, he expounds further upon the character of a true apostolic ministry. His identification of himself with his gospel, which he has made in earlier chapters, becomes more explicit.

As Ben Witherington comments, what has been simmering on a back burner in chapters 1 to 9 is brought to a roaring boil in chapters 10 to 13. End of quote. So this means that we are now faced with an abrupt transition between chapters 1 to 9 and 10 to 13.

You see, the past governs chapters 1 to 7, where Paul explains his recent travel conduct. It describes the nature of the new covenant and, therefore, of his apostolic ministry. The appeal of chapters 8 to 9 is to the present.

He seeks to complete the offering of the saints to the Jerusalem believers, for the Jerusalem believers. Paul's focus up to this point has been on the Corinthians themselves. His attention now turns to his opponents in chapters 10 to 13 where the future perspective takes over as Paul defends his apostolic authority in preparation for his third visit.

Now, as we said in the introduction to the book, there are so many people who have argued for a partition theory, suggesting that you have chapters 1 to 9 and 10 to 13. People who argue that 10 to 13 constitute or comprise a separate letter. Either part of the earlier letter that is lost, a sorrowful letter, or even a later letter to Corinth.

But we must say, look, we hold together the literary unity of 2nd Corinthians. Let that be clear, let that be clear. Because even though there are partition theories, even if we concede, let's for a moment concede that this book is comprised of various little bits, parts here and there.

But what we have in the canon is what we have, and we take it as a literary unity because it does not detract from the message of the passage. So, the question is, what does what we have in the canon tell us? What does it mean for us today as ministers or as believers? We know that there is a worsening condition between, I mean, a problem between the Corinthians and Paul. These chapters fall into three clear parts.

In chapter 10, verses 1 to 18, Paul directly confronts his opponents in Corinth in defense of his integrity as an apostle. In chapter 11, verses 1 to 12 and 13, he feels compelled to play the part of a fool in his boasting. Finally, in chapter 12:14 to 13:10, Paul admonishes the church to set itself in order in preparation for his third visit to Corinth.

Otherwise, he will be forced to act with severity when he comes. The letter then concludes in 13:11 to 14 with a final exhortation and a benediction. So, let's begin with chapter 10, where Paul begins to answer his opponents.

You see, these intruders who opposed Paul's authority in Corinth were Jews. I mean, there have been various conversations about who Paul's opponents were in Corinth. Jerry Sumney has written a very good book on the opponents of Paul in Corinth in reaction to what Dieter George wrote, and those are wonderful conversations, good conversations to look at.

But what we know is that these intruders have come to subvert Paul's authority, and they were advocating that Gentile Christians should adopt Jewish practices while claiming to be apostles of Christ. So, Paul felt a specific obligation to the Corinthians to protect them from the false teachers who were undermining the Corinthians' confidence in his authority. Rather than giving away his strong feelings toward these opponents, he submits himself to the meekness and gentleness of Christ.

So, let's read in 2nd Corinthians chapter 10, beginning from verse 1. Actually, we will read the entire chapter. Now I, Paul, myself urge you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, I who am meek when face to face with you, but bold toward you when absent. I ask that when I am present, I need not be bold with the confidence with which I propose to be courageous against some who regard us as if we walked according to the flesh.

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, and we are ready to punish all disobedience whenever the obedience is complete.

You are looking at things as they are outwardly. If anyone is confident in himself that he is Christ, let him consider this again within himself: just as he is Christ, so are we. For even if I boast somewhat further about our authority, which the Lord gave for building you up and not for destroying you, I will not be put to shame.

For I do not wish to seem as if I will terrify you by my letters. For they say his letters are weighty and strong, but his personal presence is unimpressive, and his speech contemptible. Let such a person consider this: what we are in war by letters when absent, such persons we are also indeed when present.

We are not bold enough to class or compare ourselves with some of those who commend themselves, but when they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they do so without understanding. But we will not boast beyond our measure, but within the measure of the sphere which God appointed to us as a measure, to reach even as far as you. For we are not overextending ourselves as if we did not reach out to you.

For we were forced to come, we were the first to come even as far as you in the gospel of Christ, not boasting beyond our measure, that is, in other men's labels, but with the hope that as your faith grows, we will be within our sphere enlarged even more by you, so as to preach the gospel even to the regions beyond you, and not to boast in what has been accomplished in the sphere of another. But he who boasts is to boast in the Lord, for it is not he who commends himself that is approved, but he whom the Lord commends. So, we see in the whole chapter that Paul answers his opponents.

You see, the apostle faced his various opponents' charges, both direct and indirect, with the basic assertion in verse 3. In verse 3, you see it right there: it says in verse 3, he says, for though we work in the flesh, we do not war against us in the flesh. I like the translation of the NRSV at this point. It says that we live as human beings, but we do not wage war according to human standards.

So, when he says that even though we live in the flesh, we live as human beings, he is going to face and confront his message headlong. In his ministry as an apostle, Paul's weapons are spiritual. His authority is consistent. You see that in verses 7 to 11, and his boasting is legitimate in 12 to 18.

It's interesting, though, that Paul does not name his opponents, but he knows who they are. Well, why does he not name them? We really don't know. Maybe, as somebody has suggested, the technique of not naming was already recognized as a way of diminishing an opponent's status.

That's what Shillington suggests. He said the technique of not naming was already recognized as a way of diminishing an opponent's status. Paul names his friends and associates, but he does not name his enemies.

Maybe I should say, well, it's not worth it. Let's not exalt them. That is very interesting.

You see, the rhetorical character of chapter 10:1 to 18, is one with chapters 10 to 13. The mood here is defensive and belongs to the larger sense of what our scholars call forensic or judicial rhetoric. It's like Paul himself was before a court of law, and he was defending himself.

Paul has the setting of the law court, just the same thing as we have in chapters 1 to 7. Paul was intent on persuading his readers. Paul writes within the persuasive tradition of Greco-Roman rhetoric. As an educated person of his time, he probably does this naturally rather than self-consciously.

The forensic note dominates his defense of his apostolic authority and the gospel. It is very, very important to bear this in mind. Look, a new situation appears to have developed between the writing of chapters 1 to 9 and chapters 10 to 13.

Remember we said in one of our previous sessions that it's not that Paul sat down overnight and said, I'm writing 2nd Corinthians today from chapter 1 to chapter 13. It doesn't happen that way. He probably wrote chapters 1 to 9, and in between, as he was doing that, before he could send it off, a new situation arose, and he therefore wrote 10 to 13 differently.

As Frances Young has also argued persuasively in her book *Meaning and Truth*, in 2nd Corinthians, she has shown that most of the themes that you find in the first section of 2nd Corinthians 1 to 9 are actually present there in 10 to 13. And you see some of the overlapping languages. An example is the issue of boasting, which you find in the first part and the other issues like that.

So, we see this as a literary unit. So, looking at chapter 10, we can divide it into three. The very first thing is verses 1 to 6. In verses 1 to 6, you see Paul defending himself.

Well, you see the meekness and the firmness with which he defends himself. Or you see the spiritual nature of Paul's weapons. Here, Paul implores the Corinthians not to make it necessary for him to assert his authority boldly when he next comes to visit them.

He appears to respond to a view of himself held by some in Corinth. John Calvin describes it this way. See what they are saying.

See, they were saying, here is a man who is well aware of his inferiority in our presence. He is so very modest and timid, but now, when he's far away, he busts out into fierce attacks upon us. Why is his speechless bold than his letters? That's what John Calvin says. You see, in his critics' minds, Paul's personal presence did not correspond to the authority it displayed in his letters.

That is evident from verse 10. So, they misinterpreted Paul's reticence to exercise his apostolic authority because they did not accurately design the spiritual nature of apostolic ministry. They did not know what it meant.

Maybe those false apostles who are coming there while flaunting themselves, showing they have power, but Paul was not like that. You see, their lack of understanding of Paul's warfare is reflected in their perception of the gospel itself and, therefore, of his Christ. All was perverted for them.

So Paul opens this section of his letter with an emphatic personal appeal that rings very loudly with an air of authority. He said, I myself, Paul.

Appeal. Yes, a forceful designation that occurs only here in Paul's letters. This is the only place where he will say, I myself Paul.

In other places, he says, I myself. He said that, but to say I myself Paul. Here, I mean, the Greek is actually very strong. He says, *autos ego*.

Paul doesn't use that. I mean, *ego paulos*. *Ego paulos*.

I myself, Paul. I Paul. Paul may perhaps want to distinguish himself from his co-sender Timothy.

We don't know whether that was the issue. Remember, we said that Paul was willing to collaborate and put Timothy's name in the letter, but we haven't heard about Timothy ever since. But now he says, I myself, Paul.

Maybe this is just a means of separating himself from those co-workers, not because anything was wrong with them, but because all the insults and accusations were hurled against Paul as a person rather than his co-workers. So, he wanted to take those things head-on. He's preparing to assume, at this point, a mantle of authority.

Paul personally faces the challenge of his authority as an apostle. Yet, and this is interesting, though, here's a man who wants to exercise authority. He said, I myself, Paul, but then he went on to soften the proposed exercise of his apostolic authority.

You know what he said? Instead of commanding, he said, I appeal to you. Here is a man who wants to exercise authority, but immediately, he says, I appeal to you. I appeal to you.

Very interesting. I appeal to you. So, Paul felt a special obligation to protect the Corinthians, and here he submitted himself to the meekness and gentleness of Christ while dealing firmly with the situation.

His enemies accused him of being humble, but Paul's firmness is manifest in the boldness with which he handles it. His enemies accused him of being humble when he was present with the Corinthians and being bold when he was absent from them. They implied that Paul was really a coward, a coward who acted boldly only from a distance.

He flatly denies that accusation by urging his readers to conduct themselves in such a way that when he comes, he will not have to show his enemies to be liars, which he will do. As we see in verse 2, he assures his readers that although he is meek, he can also be bold and courageous. His boldness was not going to be limited to his letters.

As a matter of fact, there was a reason why Paul was gentle while he was with them but bold in writing. He wanted them to act to take care of what was wrong amidst them. Paul talks, he says, I appeal to you, and this is encouraging and challenging as well.

He appealed to them by making them see that he was one of them, and he addressed the congregation as fellow believers, certain that they would acknowledge him as an apostle. He said by the meekness and the gentleness of Christ. Listen, we have said in one of our sessions that Paul exercised authority with humility.

Here again, he shows it. Paul's authority is affectionately exercised in the Spirit of Christ, who commissioned him to serve, something that Paul also indirectly appeals to the Corinthians to act in this way. Nope, the emphasis here is on Paul, not on the Corinthians.

Christ's character, as defined by meekness and gentleness, is the manner and agency of Paul's appeal. We find these two terms coming together in ancient texts, including other early Christian texts. You see, the same question applies here as in chapter 8, verse 9, which referred to Christ becoming poor.

Thus, Paul's reference to Christ's meekness and gentleness described the pre-existing Christ, who, in his incarnation, took upon himself the lowliness of humanity. Margaret Thrall suggests that these qualities also apply to Jesus's humiliating death. Does Paul refer to Jesus's humiliating death? Does Paul refer to characteristics

displayed in the historical life of Jesus, who claimed, I am gentle and humble in heart? Some interpreters seek to decide on the basis of a careful study of the words meekness and gentleness.

Although both terms can mean gentleness, they are not simply synonyms. They are different. In this figure of speech, we see that one qualifies the other.

It's just like Paul talks about grace and apostleship. In 2nd Corinthians chapter 10 verse 1, the more familiar meekness defines gentleness. That's what happens there.

He talks about gentleness, that is, gentle restraint. Gentle restraint. You find the same word when Felix, the governor, is courteously requested to hear the charges against Paul.

He said, be kind enough to hear us. This is talking about character traits. Gentle and meek.

I mean, when you look at that when Jesus says, I'm meek, I'm slowly, probably the meekness and gentleness of Christ here described the gentle demeanor throughout his earthly life, including his non-retaliation even during his passion. And Paul exhibits the same thing. When we talk about meekness, it is the quality of not being overly impressed by a sense of one's self-importance.

You know, we always say that some people are legends in their own minds. They are legends in their own mind. They see themselves as legends in their own minds.

Paul was not that. Paul did not see himself as a legend in his own mind. Not at all.

He did not have a bloated sense of self-importance. No, not at all. Put another way, when you talk about proudness, humility, gentleness, and meekness, it's used in Scripture to denote the humble and gentle attitude that expresses itself in particular situations, impatient submissiveness to offense, free from malice, and desire for revenge.

Now, this is holiness right there. Think about all that was done to Paul. This is basically a fundamental Christian virtue, a disposition by which one accepts the disciplines of God without resistance, just as Jesus submitted to the disciplines of his ministry.

That's what meekness is all about—and then gentleness. Gentleness includes a sense of graciousness and forbearance, the quality that makes allowances when the facts of the situation might call for a different reaction, but you make allowances.



The word family is what describes God's character of gracious forbearance. With this term, Paul is pointing out, as John Calvin says, that nothing lies nearer his heart than gentleness, which becomes a minister of Christ. A minister of Christ must be gentle.

And, of course, Paul says it in the pastoral, it must not be quarrelsome. In light of the charges against him, Paul describes himself with a note of irony. Look at what he says now in verse 2. I ask, when I'm present, I need not show boldness by daring to oppose those who think we're acting according to human standards.

That is, when we are face-to-face with you, we know how we act. I mean, I read it in the New American Standard Bible now. I ask that when I'm present, I need not to be bold with the confidence with which I propose to be courageous against some who regard us as if we walk according to the flesh.

In other words, we are not braggarts, not at all. We are not timid. You know, you feel that we are timid when we are with you, but when we are away, Paul says, no, don't let me come to you the way you want to see me.

You don't want me to come to you with a strong attitude, not at all. You see, the Corinthians were probably saying that this apostle was very weak. Adam Clarke paraphrases their thought.

Listen to what he says. I quote, this apostle of yours is a mere braggadocio. When he is among you, you know how base and contemptible he is when absent.

So, see how he brags and boasts—end of quote. I mean, that summarizes what they were saying, what these people were saying, that he's just no, forget about him, he's very timid.

And it's very interesting that this word they use here is used in the New Testament. It means lowly, lowly, humble. It's in James chapter 1, verse 9, let the brother of low estate.

That's the way it says. It's used in Matthew chapter 11, verse 29, for I am meek and lowly in heart. 1st Peter chapter 5 verse 5, he said, I come to you, look at it there again, I said, I come to you when we meet with face to face, but we are timid when we go away.

But here, in 2nd Corinthians chapter 10, is used in a negative sense against Paul. It takes on a negative or very pejorative sense that is very unusual in the New Testament. So, they say, Paul, it's not just a matter of humble, no, but you are servile, you are demeaned, that's the way they see him.

That's why you see the NIV put the word timid in mock quotation marks; that is what they were calling Paul to be. This more negative connotation is consistent with the common use of the term in the larger Hellenistic world, as it is known by the Corinthians. So, Paul, following the model of his incarnate Lord, paradoxically affirms them.

You say I am lowly, yes, but not in the sense you think I am. You think I'm lowly, and I am indeed lowly, but not in the way you understand lowly, not at all. So, he says, I, who I am meek, that's in verse 1. I, who I am meek, when face to face with you.

You see, here is Paul turning the argument in its head. They were saying, Paul, oh now he's very lowly, he's very timid, he's very servile. Paul uses the same word. He says, yes, you are right, I am timid, I am lowly, but what you see as timid and lowly is not in the sense you understand it.

He uses the same word that his opponents use against him, but he understands his own lowliness in terms of the lowliness of Christ. Then in verse 2, he says, I ask you. In verse 2, actually, that word, I ask, is a different, softer verb.

Earlier, he said, I appeal to you, *parakaleo*, but here he says, I ask you. He says, I ask you. The word used for ask here is better translated as beg, I beg you.

*Deo mai*, I beg you. Now he resumes the appeal of verse 1 by specifying its content. He has the Corinthians to set things in order so that when he comes, he will not be forced.

You see, it's like, I beg you that when I'm present, I need not be bold with the confidence with which I propose to be courageous against some. It's like, I beg you. I mean, here is Paul.

We just learned quite a number of things from this man. He said, I don't want to do what you want me to do. I am bold, but the kind of boldness that I exhibit is not like the kind of boldness you want.

He said, which I propose to be courageous against some who regard us as if we work according to human standards. So, Paul denies in verse 2 that he conducts his own life according to human standards, but he concedes that he lives in the flesh. You see, there's a play on words here which is just evident in the Greek.

He said he does not conduct his life *katasaka*, that is, according to human standards, but he concedes that he lives *ensaki*, that is, as a human. He does not conduct his life according to human standards, and yet he is human. Flesh is not the source of the orientation of his life and ministry, but he necessarily lives as a human lives.

He lives in the human world with its limitations and is subject to human weakness, and yet he does not fight or war or labor as a mere human. In answer to his critics, Paul changes from a moral to a military metaphor. For though we live in the world *ensaki*, we do not wage war.

He uses the word *now*, which means to wage war, as the world does. So, the contrast between life in the flesh and war, according to the flesh, justifies the translation we have that we don't walk this way. So, what follows in verse 4 is Paul's most extensive use of military imagery in his letters.

Making war, weapons, warfare, strongholds, high things, taking captive, state of readiness. This is a passage that is well known in Christendom, particularly in the majority world, when we talk about spiritual warfare. I'm sure at one point or the other, all of us have had that passage quoted: the weapons of our warfare, particularly in the King James Version, are not carnal but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds.

I am not of the flesh but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. So here is the passage very well known about spiritual warfare, but here in this context, Paul is talking about the problems of the Corinthians, those who were interlopers there, who came in and they were actually warring against like humans according to the flesh, demeaning him, berating him, destroying his character, trying to malign his reputation, and he says I don't do exactly what they do.

What does that mean? He says the weapon of our warfare. You see, he defines it in contrast to theirs by saying that it's of divine power, has divine power. Paul's weapons are those Christ-like, the Christ-like life he lives, and the gospel of Christ he proclaims.

The Christ-like life that he lives and the gospel that he proclaims. So, here, Paul pictures himself and says that the gospel is the divine power that demolishes or tears down strongholds. He pictures himself no longer as a captive, as we saw him in chapter 2 in God's triumphal procession, but now as a soldier armed with the spirit-empowered weapon of the gospel.

He first assaults the powerful fortresses of those who attack his ministry with their false teaching and misleading reasoning. But maybe he had more in mind than that. He comes armed with weapons ultimately dependent on the power of the spirit, not on human strength and talent.

I mean, I do understand that for those of us who are the majority world, particularly in Africa and Asia, this passage is important to us when it comes to spiritual warfare because we live with the ubiquity of spirits. I mean for those of us who are from the majority world, spirits, evil spirits are ubiquitous, they're almost everywhere. So, we use this passage and say well the weapons of warfare, well maybe that's good to apply it and use it but in the context of what Paul is saying here, he's talking about those who are opposing him.

So, the apostle explains the military metaphor with three expressions: participial expressions. We wage war. He speaks of demolishing arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God.

The word arguments here echo the negative use of the word or what some people think in verse 2. So, Paul refers to the specific criticism, the other arguments of his critics in Corinth, as well as the deceptive, subtle reasonings in general, and we concede that some of these things are motivated by the devil. We can't deny that, but let's understand what he's talking about. Basically, here are the arguments that those who are opposing were marshaling against him, against his ministry, and, of course, the danger that that poses to his ministry and the deception that was going on, and then he says every proud obstacle that set itself up against the gospel. So, he identifies the gospel here as the knowledge of God, the knowledge of God.

It talks about pretension. So, we need to see, and then it goes on to say taking captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. Here, by thought, he refers to designs or schemes employed by human minds to evade the truth and the claims of the gospel, and he talks about bringing those thoughts to captivity.

Captivity in this world leads rebels to the obedience of Christ that is Paul persuades people to obey Christ. Paul pictures the captured rebellious defenders of a fortified city, a stronghold wherever it may be reduced to serving Christ. So, Paul argues here seriously that he was fighting a spiritual battle.

Paul's opponents judged him as working according to the flesh. That is, they implied that he conducted his life and ministry under the power and direction of sin. That's the implication. The meek person can be bold when the spiritual well-being of others is threatened and will do whatever the situation demands.

Paul's firmness is also manifested in the warfare that he wages against his spiritual foes. Paul does not wage spiritual warfare after the flesh as his enemies do. He asserts that his weapons are not of the flesh.

Now, we must learn a lesson when Paul says his weapons are not according to human standards. What does he want us to know? He's telling us that we must be

aware in using the theatrics and gimmicks of the world. We must not be duped into thinking that our methods are not important or, in other words, acquiesce with the saying that the end justifies the means, not for Paul.

The method is just as important as the message because if our methods are wrong then we would have lost the battle. If our methods are wrong we would have lost the battle. The weapons of the believer are mighty through God to the pulling down of the stronghold of the enemy strongholds which Paul defines as the reasonings of the unsaved and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God.

You see what is that talking about? This is a reference to the world's wisdom that resists rejects and substitutes itself for the knowledge that God has been pleased to reveal through the gospel. Armed with his dreadful holy artillery the Apostle is ready to avenge all disobedience to his authority at Corinth. However, he will move in and wipe out all resistance only after the Corinthians' obedience to his authority is completed.

So, we see again Paul's optimism. So, Paul is very, very clear in defending his apostleship. He said in verses we will be ready.

We will be ready. This completes his use of the metaphor to describe his apostolic ministry. We'll be ready to punish every act of disobedience.

It refers to the remaining insurgents in the Corinthian Church, not exclusively to the intruding false apostles. Paul says I am coming in, and when I come in, I'll take care of the rest. I'll take care of not only the false apostles but also the rest of the rebellion that continues to linger in the church.

You see, Paul leaves unspecified the kind of punishment we don't know. And you see a word, a word of plain obedience there. The obedience Paul expects is, first of all, to Christ and, by implication, to that of the apostles.

To wage Christian warfare with spiritual weapons, we must never rely solely on the methods the world uses to capture human minds and hearts. We learn that lesson. Rather, we must always submit to the Spirit of Christ in defense of the truth.

Now, in verses 7 to 11, Paul maintains the consistency of his authority and the response to the charge of weakness. He says look at what is before your eyes. From verse 7, you look at things as they are outwardly.

If anyone is confident in himself that he is Christ let him consider this again within himself. So, in verses 7 to 11, having briefly described his ministry in the image of warfare, Paul now addresses the Corinthians personally in verses 7 to 11. He explains

how he will exercise his authority among them, and by doing so in doing so, he insists that once the Corinthians take proper account of the character and purpose of his authority, they will discover that he is in person what he appears to be in his letters.

You see, as a servant of Christ, there is no inconsistency between Paul's written word to them when away and his conduct when he was pressed with them. There was no inconsistency. The problem is that some have mistakenly judged him.

They have mistakenly judged him that that was the case, and Paul says, no, that is not the case at all. So, he describes his ministry in 3 to 6, and then in 7 to 11, he explains to them that he sees that once they take a proper account of his character, they discover that he is the same. But they mistakenly judge him by worldly criteria.

In verse 7, he says look what is before you. Now, a little problem there: is this a question, or is it, or is Paul making a statement? The NIV has it: you are looking only on the surface of things, and the NASB says the same thing: you are looking at things as they are, cowardly, but in verse 7, when you look at NRSV, look at what is before your eyes. So, the question is, is it the King James will take, do you look on things after the outward appearance, or as we have it, look at what is before your eyes in the NRSV, or look at the obvious facts, as we have it in the margin of the NIV, and then it's translated as an imperative.

Now, each option has some support, however, it seems better to take it as look at what is before your eyes, look at what you see, that's the NRSV, look at what is before you see. That's important elsewhere in Paul's writing when he uses that as an imperative, but what we're looking at here is that Paul is telling them, take note, take note of my ministry among you. He asks them to take note that in his ministry among them, he also belongs to Christ; look at what is before your eyes; if you are confident that you belong to Christ, remind yourself that just as you belong to Christ, so also do we, we belong to Christ. Now, in verse 8, if I boast, even if I boast a little too much of authority, which the Lord gave for building you up, and not for tearing you down, I will not be ashamed of it.

You see, the opponents of Paul claim, in some superior sense, to be servants of Christ. In some superior sense to that of Paul, they claim to be servants of Christ more than Paul. In fact, Magrath and Thoreau suggest that Christus A9 is a shorthand for saying the apostles of Christ.

This will include in Paul's usage of the phrase, is being with the Corinthians a full member of the new covenant community. And Paul's opponents discredited him on both counts. They said, no, you are not one of us and neither you are not an apostle.

But I think I love what Pelagius said in this comment where he says, quote, no one is more foolish than the person who thinks that he alone belongs to Christ. End of quote. No one is more foolish than the person who thinks that he alone belongs to Christ.

You know what he's saying? The Corinthians were basically foolish in thinking that Paul doesn't belong to Christ, is not a servant, not at all. So, Paul says, if anyone, maybe, if any, refers to the ringleader of the intruders. To assign one's opponents to anonymity was an insult.

So, for Paul to say, if anyone, he could simply have mentioned the name of the opponent. But he said, if anyone, and of course the Corinthians know the anyone. Paul's reference is probably more representative than specific.

Well, in other words, it was anyone, anyone, not as foreign to their ringleader; both of those are plausible. If anyone, the ringleader or mentioned name or anyone, as in anyone, Paul says, if anyone thinks it belongs to Christ, I belong more. And then it goes on to say, so, so do we.

Now, even if I boast a little too much of authority, with the Lord gave up for building you up and not for tearing you down, I will not be ashamed of it. It's in the ministry of Paul, among the Corinthians, that a rise speaks for itself. Paul says, listen, my ministry among you is enough.

It speaks for itself. It does speak for itself. And if anybody has anything to boast about now, even if I boast a little, you see that same word appeared earlier on.

He said, I'm just boasting. I'm not going to be ashamed. I like the way John Wesley says it this way.

He said I've said no more than I can make good. I've said no more that I can make good. Paul says, look, I've delivered.

You know it, which the Lord gave us for building you up and not for tearing you down. I will not be ashamed of it. So, Paul is talking about his authority as an apostle.

He urges his readers to face the reality of things as they actually are. You see, we need to learn today. Many had been duped by the deceptions and lies of the enemies.

Paul wants them to see the facts clearly. The meek person can see this. Meekness does not require us to ignore facts, even though they may be unpleasant to us.

The meek person accepts reality. So, he told them to see. Paul is telling these Corinthians to watch it.

You need to know who I've seen. Ordinarily, the apostle did not boast of his authority, but necessity forces him to do so now. He will not be put to shame by remaining silent as though he were a fraud.

If he kept quiet, it would simply validate all they had been saying. Though writing as a meek man, equal glory in his authority for it was giving him, it was giving him of Christ for their sake, for their own beneficial purposes, for the edification of others. On the other hand, Paul implies that the false teachers were exercising their self-appointed authority for destruction.

Their teaching and conduct were destroying the church. A true apostle will never exercise his authority to this end. For instance, it was not Paul's intention to throw his apostolic weight around by his correspondence so as to indemnify or frighten his readers.

We see that in verse 9. The Corinthians will also find that another charge that his enemies made against him is not true. You see the charge in verses 10 and 11. For they say his letters are weighty and strong, but his personal presence is unimpressive, and his speech contemptible.

Let such a person consider this: what we are inward by letters when absent, such persons we are also indeed when we are present. He does not want to go to Corinth with a rod. Now we come to verses 12 to 18, the last section of that passage.

Here, he talks about boasting. Paul appeals to his readers not only to take another look at the facts but also to consider the ground of his boastings. You see, the meek person can boast as long as his or her boasting rests on a true and sure foundation.

The boastings of Paul's enemies were without foundation on two counts. One, they set themselves up as the standard of excellence, and they credited to themselves the achievement of others. The lifestyle of the false prophet stood in contrast to that of Paul.

Paul does not have the courage to number himself or to compare himself to these people, so he refuses to boast as they do by measuring and comparing themselves among themselves, which is not wise. You see, Paul also lived in a competitive culture like ours. You see, in our own competitive culture, it's a natural thing to make comparisons.



Children are constantly comparing their ages, heights, grades, and abilities. Adults compare achievements, education, positions, houses, cars, education, and material acquisitions. Sadly enough, ministers compare the size of the congregation, attendance at meetings, property, music, and so many other things.

And we can go on, and without a doubt, we like to compare ourselves with someone who makes us look good. We can't always find somebody who does not match up to us. We think we are building ourselves up when in actual fact, we are knocking others down.

It is evil, and Paul says we do not compare ourselves with ourselves like these people are doing because in comparing ourselves with ourselves, they are foolish. And the church is suffering from such comparisons and competitions today. Who has the best instrument? Who has the best orchestra? Who has the best building? Who has the largest church in the world? Who has the largest building in the world? Who has the tallest building in the world? I mean, that comparison keeps going on and on and on.

If it is evil in the world, how much more within the body of Christ? We compare ministers with ministers, preachers with preachers, their voice with their voice, their manner of preaching, and all that, and it keeps on going. And congregations compare themselves with one another. It has not stopped.

And Paul's opponents are a set of standards. Paul refuses to join in that. He refuses to be involved in such a thing.

And not only that, in verse 13, from verses 13 to 16, he actually refuses to take credit for anything that belonged to the labor of other people. He is careful to boast only about the field that was assigned to him by God, a field that includes Corinth. And then in verse 14, he denies any overextension of himself as though Corinth was not his proper sphere of his service.

He was the first to go as far as Corinth with the gospel of Christ. Being unable to boast of the things beyond his appointed sphere of labor, Paul says in verse 15 that he's not going to claim the labor of others for his own. Not for any reason.

But then he did have the expectation of ministering in other uncharted areas, unreached areas of this territory when the Corinthian's faith is sufficiently increased so that they could manage their own affairs. In fact, he expects to preach the gospel onto parts beyond Corinth, even west of Rome. In verse 16, he refuses to boast in the work that has already been done by someone else.

You see, Paul's boasting in chapter 10 is grounded in the important principle that all boasting must be done in the Lord. All boasting. A meek person will give the Lord the credit for all that is accomplished through his or her life.

For he or she knows that he cannot do anything apart from the Lord. Therefore, all boasting must be in the Lord. Thanking him for what he is pleased to do through us.

The Lord does not accept anyone who commends himself according to his own standard of excellence as the first teachers in Corinth did. You see, the value of a commendation rests in the character of the speaker rather than the words that are said. As such, only the person whom the Lord commends can actually say, well, I thank God that he has done so much for me.

We need to be careful. You see, boasting is something we have to be careful of. You see, the verb *kalkomai* and the nouns *kalkemai* or *kalkesis*, boasting, appear about 60 times in the New Testament.

So, we need to talk about it just for a minute. Of these, 54, 54 or 55 thereabout, depending on textual variance, appear in the Pauline letters. Even though you have only 60 times in the New Testament, you have 54 or 55 or thereabout in the Pauline letters.

The word group has a negative braggadocio or positive taking pride connotation. So it could be negative, it could be positive. The difference for Paul depends on what one boasts about and why one boasts.

Boasting in divine accomplishments is an appropriate expression of praise to God. But boasting in human accomplishments is always unjustified. Paul, however, considers it acceptable for Christians to boast about their human weakness and suffering.

Why? Because it leaves room for the power of God. Therefore, boasting is to be done in the Lord. And you see the way Paul ends the chapter, verses 17 and 18.

But he will boast, to boast in the Lord. And Paul has quoted that one in 1 Corinthians. That is from Jeremiah chapter 9, verse 24.

Let him who boasts boast in the Lord. Our boasting should be in the Lord, not our human accomplishments, not our talent, not in our giftedness. But the ground of our boasting should be what is accomplished through God and for God as we saw them.

This is Dr. Ayo Adewuya in his teaching on 2 Corinthians. This is session 11, 2 Corinthians 10, Paul's Apostolic Defense.