

Paul's Warfare on Behalf of His Apostolic Authority
2 Corinthians 10:3
Part Two

Satan's power over us, if we are true believers, has been broken through Christ's atoning death and therefore we do not have to be fearful of Satan. And if there is any doubt about this let me read for you **Romans 5:18-21**. **"So then as through one transgression** [referring to the transgression of Adam] **there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness** [referring to the atoning death of Christ] **there resulted justification of life to all men.** [And then what did Paul say? He said this] **(19) For as through the one man's disobedience** [again referring to the transgression of Adam] **the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One** [again referring to the atoning death of Christ] **the many will be made righteous.** [And then Paul concluded with this:] **(20) The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, (21) so that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."**

As long as we were dead in trespasses and sins we were helpless against the evil one for we were cut off from God and His promises, but once we put our faith in the person and the atoning work of Christ we gained access to God and to His promises thus breaking Satan's power over us.

What does **Hebrews 2:14** tell us? **"Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself** [referring to Christ] **likewise also partook of the same, that through death** [referring to His atoning death] **He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil."** So has Satan's power over us, through Christ's atoning death, been broken? Absolutely! He is a defeated foe!

However, though his power over us is broken it does not mean that Satan will not attack us, nor does it mean that we cannot succumb to his attacks if we fail to be strong in the Lord and the strength of His might by putting on the full armor of God. We can falter.

Let me read for you **Ephesians 6:10-17** and see if this is not so. **"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. (11) Put on the full**

armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. (12) For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. (13) Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. (14) Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, (15) and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; (16) in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. (17) And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” So how can we be strong in the Lord and the strength of His might? We can be strong in the Lord and the strength of His might by putting on the full armor of God.

So even though Satan’s power over us has been broken, we still need to be alert and to make sure that we are standing strong in the Lord and the strength of His might by making sure that we have put on the full armor of God. And if we are in fact doing this, if we are in fact standing strong in the Lord and the strength of His might having made sure that we have put on the full armor of God, it is not us who should be fearful.

And this thought brings us back to our study of **2 Corinthians**. Paul in **2 Corinthians 1-7** defended his apostolic authority to the whole of the Corinthian church regardless of whether they were repentant or unrepentant. Paul then in **2 Corinthians 8-9** took a short break and addressed only the repentant; admonishing them to complete the collection they had begun earlier for the poverty-stricken believers in Jerusalem. But now Paul in **2 Corinthians 10-13** is back defending his apostolic authority, but this time he will not primarily be addressing the congregation as a whole but rather he will be primarily addressing his remarks to a small but very significant group of recalcitrant and unrepentant sinners who still remain in the church and who are still opposing him. And what is his hope for them as he presents to them this heart-felt defense? It is that his heart-felt defense of his apostolic authority might lead them to repentance before he, with the boldness of Christ, will be compelled to punish them when he finally arrives.

And this brings us to the question that we are presently seeking to answer. How did Paul go about defending his apostolic authority to the unrepentant within the Corinthian church?

Paul began the defense of his apostolic authority to the unrepentant within the Corinthian church by focusing on his activities (2 Corinthians 10:1-6).

So let me now read for you **2 Corinthians 10:1-6** and see if this is not so. **“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! (2) 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. (3) For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, (4) for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. (5) 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, (6) and we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete.”**

Clearly Paul’s opponents, based on these verses, found a great deal of fault with Paul in terms of how he had interacted with them, both in terms of his face to face encounters with them as well as his letters to them.

So as Paul focused his defense on these activities and as he sought to address questions raised by these activities, what specific area of his life did he initially seek to protect?

Paul, in focusing on his activities, initially sought to address questions involving his demeanor (2 Corinthians 10:1-2). We see him doing this in **2 Corinthians 10:1-2**. So let me now read these verses for you. **“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! (2) 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.”**

His opponents saw his perceived timidity when present with them face to face as fear, and his boldness when absent as expressed in his letters as

flesh-driven expediency. But they were wrong. The demeanor of Paul was not being dictated by fear or flesh-driven expediency but rather by “**the meekness and gentleness of Christ,**” the very meekness and gentleness which they were now the beneficiaries of as Paul continued to patiently and compassionately urge them to repent lest he in a later visit be compelled with the boldness of Christ to unleash a final and climatic battle against them in his ongoing war to preserve the church at Corinth.

So as Paul sought to defend his apostolic authority by seeking to address questions generated by his activities, what specific area of his life did he initially seek to protect? And the answer is his demeanor!

But we are not done. There was still another area of his life that had come under attack related to his activities and that had also raised questions about him and the authoritative nature of his apostleship. So, what was this second area of his life that had come under attack? Paul, in focusing on his activities, also sought to address questions involving his methods (2 Corinthians 10:3-6).

So now let us read **2 Corinthians 10:3-6** and see if this is not so. “**For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, (4) for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. (5) 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, (6) and we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete.**” From these verses we should be able to clearly see that Paul’s opponents did not only have problems with his demeanor but with his whole methodology in dealing with the Corinthian church as well as with them in particular. In other words, his opponents had no appreciation of how a true and authoritative apostle would go about battling their opponents. This is why he goes into so much detail concerning his methods here in these verses. He is hoping that in doing so, that they by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, that they will come to repentant and will not have to suffer the punishment that he referred to in **verse 6**.

And what is my hope for this message this morning as we look only at the very first verse of this particular passage? My hope is that as we look at the very of this passage, or in other words at verse 3 as Paul begins to explain

the methodology of a true and authoritative apostle of Christ, that we might understand the amazing power that is available to us as the disciples of Christ not only to defend ourselves but even to attack him and his fortresses.

So now let us look at **verse 3**. And how does this verse begin? **“For though we walk in the flesh.”**

So, what is the significance of these words? Paul had just acknowledged at the end of **2 Corinthians 10:2** that his opponents had charged him with **“walking according to the flesh.”** Paul is now using the wording of that charge against him at the end of **verse 2** to form or to shape his ongoing defense at the beginning of **verse 3**.

Or in other words, he is playing off the word **“flesh”** at the end of **verse 2** in order to form or to shape his ongoing defense in **verse 3**.

And how will he use this word **“flesh”** to form or to shape his ongoing defense? He will use this word to help transition his apostolic defense from addressing questions regarding his “demeanor” to questions regarding his “methodology.”

So, what does he say about himself in regard to this word “flesh?” Paul at the beginning of **2 Corinthians 10:3** did not acknowledge that he walked **“according to the flesh,”** but he did acknowledge that he walked **“in the flesh.”**

So, what does this mean? When Paul acknowledged that he walked “in the flesh,” he simply acknowledged that he was human. And what did Paul seek to convey to his opponents when he acknowledged this obvious fact?

I believe that his purpose in acknowledging this obvious fact was made clear in the next phrase. So let us continue to read the verse and what did Paul say? **“For though we walk in the flesh [or in other words, though we are human], we do not war according to the flesh.**

So, what did Paul mean by this? When Paul said, “We do not war according to the flesh,” he simply meant that he and his associates did not war according to flesh-driven expediency or impulse.

So if their war with their opponents was not being driven by flesh-driven expediency or impulse, then by implication what was their war with their opponents being driven by?

Because Paul and his associates' war with his opponents was not being driven by fleshly expediency or impulse, the clear implication is that their war was being driven and empowered by God's Spirit.

So how does this happen? It happens through the filling of the Spirit, or in other words when we in response to all that God has done for us in Christ surrender ourselves to Him wholly and completely without holding anything back.

Let me now read for you **Ephesians 5:18-19** and see if this is not so. **“And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, (19) speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord.”** Clearly from these verses we can see that the filling of the Spirit is all about being controlled by the Spirit. And how do we know that? We know that because the filling of the Spirit is contrasted with being drunk with wine.

When a person is drunk with wine, are they wholly and completely under the control of the alcohol or are they only partially under its control? It is obvious. They are wholly and completely under its control.

And this is what we must be in terms of the Spirit if we are going to be able not only to defend ourselves against Satan, but also to successfully attack him and be used by God to tear down his fortresses.

Therefore, if we want to engage the forces of darkness in the strength and power of God's Spirit, then we must be willing to completely surrender our lives to His control (Ephesians 5:18).

So, what does this mean practically for us? It means that there should be absolutely nothing in our lives that is so important to us that it keeps us from doing what God may want us to do or compels us to do what God does not want us to do.

If there is something like this in our life then we are not Spirit filled. We are not living in the strength of the Lord and the power of His might. And we

have not put on the full armor of God. And as such we will not be able to successfully attack him and his fortresses and neither will we be able to stand against him and his attacks against us.

We as Christians can either choose to battle according to the flesh or according to the Spirit. It is our choice. If we choose to battle according to the flesh we will lose. But if we choose to battle according to the Spirit, in the strength and power of His might, for all of God's armaments and weapons when implemented by His Spirit will prevail, we will win.

May we by the grace of God engage the forces of darkness in the strength and power of God's Spirit.