

**The Purpose of Apostolic Authority**  
**2 Corinthians 10:7-8**  
**Part One**

It is very easy for us to say things about ourselves that we would like to think are true.

I could tell you this morning that I am a great guy, but just because I say that I am a great guy does not make me one.

I could tell you that I am a great husband, but just because I say that I am a great husband does not make me one.

I could tell you this morning that I am a great pastor, but just because I say that I am a great pastor does not make me one.

So if this is so then what must also be present along with our claim to make our claim believable? It is really quite simple. If our claim is going to be believable it must be accompanied by a life that matches the claim.

If our life matches our claim then our claim is supported, but of course if our life does not match our claim, then our claim is not be supported.

This brings us back to our study of **2 Corinthians** and more specifically to our study of **2 Corinthians 10:7-11**. In this particular passage Paul will continue to defend his apostolic authority against the attacks of his opponents, who in addition to dismissing his claim that he was in fact a true and authoritative apostle of Christ trumpeted their own claim that they themselves were the true apostles. So how will Paul do this? How will Paul defend himself from their false assertion?

Paul in 2 Corinthians 10:7-11 will draw a contrast between the way his apostolic authority expressed itself and the way his opponents' so-called apostolic authority expressed itself. And why would this be important? It would reveal something. And what would that be? Paul believed that the way his apostolic authority expressed itself supported his claim and the way his opponents' so-called apostolic authority expressed itself did not support their claims. But why would he think this?

Paul's expression of apostolic authority was consistent with its God-given purpose and his opponents' expression of their so-called apostolic authority was not consistent with that purpose. Or in other words, Paul's claim was supported by the way he lived his life and his opponents' claims were not supported by the way they lived their lives, for his apostolic authority was consistent with his claim and the expression of his opponents' so-called apostolic authority was not consistent with their claim.

So now let me read for you **2 Corinthians 10:7-11**. **“You are looking at things as they are outwardly. If anyone is confident in himself that he is Christ's, let him consider this again within himself, that just as he is Christ's, so also are we. (8) 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, (9) for I do not wish to seem as if I would terrify you by my letters. (10) For they say, ‘His letters are weighty and strong, but his personal presence is unimpressive and his speech contemptible.’ (11) Let such a person consider this, that what we are in word by letters when absent, such persons we are also in deed when present.”**

So again, what was the importance of these verses in terms of Paul's defense against his opponents' false assertions? The importance of these verses is that once Paul's readers considered the contrast being drawn out by Paul between himself and his opponents as it related to the God-given purpose for apostolic authority, his readers would have been left with only one reasonable conclusion: Paul was the true apostle and his opponents within Corinth were not.

So now let us begin to examine these verses more carefully. And this morning we will only be able to consider **verses 7-8**. And what will these verses spell out for us? 2 Corinthians 10:7-8 will spell out for us the specific purpose of apostolic authority.

And what is my hope for this message? My hope is that just as Paul supported his claim to be an apostle of Christ by living his life in a manner consistent with the authority he received, I would hope that we would be challenged to support our claim of being one of Christ's disciples by living our life in a manner consistent with the authority we have received as His disciples to go into the world to preach the gospel, for in living in a manner

consistent with the authority we have been given as His disciples to go into the world with the gospel of Christ we support our claim that we are His disciple.

So now let us begin our examination of these two verses by looking at the very first words of **verse 7**. And what are those words? These are the words, **“You are looking.”**

So could these initial words be translated in any other way? And the answer is yes. The words “you are looking” (BLEPETE) would be better translated as a command “look!”

And why would I say this? Whenever the Greek word “BLEPETE” is translated in any other New Testament text it always translated as a command. And though it is not translated this way in the NAS it is translated in this way in the RSV and the ESV.

So, what is Paul commanding these unrepentant Corinthians to do? He is commanding them to **“Look at things as they are outwardly.”** Or in other words, he is commanding them to look at the evidence!”

And why would this be necessary? It was necessary because Paul’s apostolic authority had been challenged by certain false apostles who had entered into Corinth and who were seeking to replace Paul and his associates as the spiritual leaders of the Corinthian church.

In light of this conflict that was still going on in Corinth, Paul, after commanding the unrepentant within Corinth to examine the evidence, appears to put forward a challenge to these apostolic pretenders.

So let us continue to read **verse 7** and see if this is not so. **“If anyone [referring in a collective sense to all his opponents] is confident in himself that he is Christ’s, let him consider this again within himself, that just as he is Christ’s, so also are we.”**

Paul’s opponents were very confident about something. They were confident that they were Christ’s. Isn’t this what the verse says? But what does this mean?

By claiming to be Christ's the false apostles were undoubtedly claiming more than just that they were Christians. When Paul's opponents claimed to be Christ's, they were claiming that they, unlike Paul, were Christ's true authoritative apostles. This is what they meant and this is what they were confidently asserting.

So did Paul choose at this point to deny this particular assertion? No, he did not. He will deny it later in **2 Corinthians 11:13-15**, but he did not choose at this particular point in time to deny it here.

Rather he went on to say, **"Let him** [referring in a collective sense to his opponents] **consider this again within himself, that just as he is Christ's, so also are we.**" So, what did Paul mean by this?

Paul, rather than choosing to immediately deny his opponents' assertion that they were the apostles of Christ, chose rather to inform his opponents that he could make the very same claim about himself.

In other words, Paul is saying to his opponents, as well as to all those who had come under their influence, that people can say whatever they want to say about themselves but just because they say it, does not make it so. And this explains why he had commanded the unrepentant in the church at Corinth, those who had come under the influence of these false apostles, **"to look,"** or in other words to **"to look at the evidence."**

So now having given the command to look at the evidence at the **"beginning"** of **verse 7** and now having explained the command of at the **"end"** of that very same verse, Paul is now prepared to help them to sort through that evidence in **verse 8** by providing them a criteria by which they could measure a person's claim, whether true or false, over and against a clear biblical standard.

So now let us read **verse 8** and let us see if we can discern what the biblical standard might have been. **"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."**

So how did he begin this verse? Paul began 2 Corinthians 10:8 by reluctantly boasting about the authority that he had been given by the Lord. So if he was

reluctant to boast about this, why did he do it? He did it because of what was at stake. He understood that time was running out for these unrepentant sinners and he was pulling out all the stops, even resorting to boasting, to turn them and to secure them.

This is why Paul felt compelled to boast, even though this was not what he would have preferred.

And what was he boasting about? He was boasting about the authority that had been given him by the Lord.

Now notice what he says about this apostolic authority that he had been given. Paul declared that the purpose for him having been given this apostolic authority by the Lord was for their building up and not their destruction.

Now there is something very interesting about this statement, **“for building you up and not for destroying you.”**

When Paul used the words “for building you up and not for destroying you,” he connected what he was doing among the Corinthians with the ministry of the new covenant (Jeremiah 31:28).

We see this in **Jeremiah 31:28** where God, in the context of the new covenant, promised that at some future time that He would watch over Israel to build up rather than to destroy.

So, what is the big deal about this statement that he connects with his work among the Corinthians? Let us now go down a little bit further in this text and read **Jeremiah 31:31-33** and I believe as we do so, we will see why it was such a big deal for Paul to have reached all the way back into **Jeremiah 31** to explain what he had been doing among the Corinthians as he stated that he was doing in **2 Corinthians 10:8**.

And what do these verses say in **Jeremiah 31:31-33**? **“Behold, days are coming,’ declares the Lord, ‘when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, (32) not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke,**

**although I was a husband to them,’ declares the Lord. (33) ‘But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,’ declares the Lord, ‘I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.’”**

So, what was the point of this covenant? The new covenant was given to provide a basis of salvation that had nothing to do with us but rather had everything to do with God and what He was prepared to do on our behalf (Jeremiah 31:31-33).

Has this covenant yet been ratified with blood as the old covenant was ratified with blood? Yes it has, not with the blood of bulls and goats but rather with the precious blood of Christ. Let me read for you **1 Corinthians 11:24-25. “And when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, ‘This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me.’ (25) In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.’”**

When Christ gave up His life and shed His blood on the cross of Calvary, He ratified “the new covenant” promised to the nation of Israel in Jeremiah 31:31-33 (1 Corinthians 11:24-25).

And this was the message that Paul, as an apostle of Christ, had been given authority by Christ to preach.

So had Paul done this among the Corinthians? Or in other words, had he, based on the authority that he had been given as Christ’s apostle, preached the message of the new covenant, or in other words the gospel of Christ among the Corinthians for the purpose of their salvation, or in other words for their building up and not for their destruction? Paul believed he had.

When he came into Corinth it was not about him and getting something for himself unlike his opponents. It was all about them as he, as a faithful minister of the new covenant, boldly and sacrificially proclaimed the gospel of Christ and for what purpose? **“For their building up and not for their destruction,”** or in other words for the purpose of their salvation

Paul may not have been as eloquent or as personally imposing as his opponents. He may not have been “all that” in the eyes of the world, but there should have been no doubt that he had received apostolic authority based on how he lived his life and the fruit of his life among the Corinthians.

And then he concludes with these words, **“I will not be put to shame,”** or in other words wrapping up what he initially said about his boasting. He wants his readers to know that though he might have been compelled to reluctantly boast about the authority that he had been given by Christ to build up and not to destroy, nothing that he has told them will prove to be false when his future works are examined before the judgment seat of Christ.

Paul’s claim to be an authoritative apostle of Christ was supported by the way he lived. He had come into Corinth, wicked and godless city, and without any regard to himself proclaimed the gospel of Christ. And what was the result? The church at Corinth was born thus proving what? Thus proving that he was an authoritative apostle of Christ.

So, what about us? Have we been given authority? Absolutely! We also have been given authority as the ministers of the gospel to go into the world and to make disciples of all nations. Do you believe that? You should because it is true.

But does the way we are living our life support that claim, and does the fruit of our lives support that claim?

If it does, praise God for the evidence of our lives supports our claim that we are Christ’s disciple and if it does not, then let us confess our sin so that our lives and the fruit of our lives support what we have been saying about ourselves.

May God give us the grace as a minister of the new covenant to live our lives in such a way that the facts of our gospel would be confirmed by the way we live.