

2 Corinthians 10:1- *Now I, Paul, myself am pleading with you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ—who in presence am lowly among you, but being absent am bold toward you.*

Paul's previous letter to the Corinthians carried a much stronger tone as he confronted sin and addressed those who questioned his apostolic authority. In this letter, however, his approach is more relational. He is expressing his desire not to have to come to them with the same bold correction he had exercised before, but rather in the meekness and gentleness of Christ.

Paul's outward appearance was not flashy nor did it demand or attract attention. He relied not on eloquent speech alone but on "a demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (1 Cor. 2:4) because "the kingdom of God is not in word but in power" (1 Cor. 4:20).

If we become dependent on our charisma but fail to develop our character, it can ultimately destroy us. A mentor of mine once said, "*Neresa, you do not want your ministry to grow faster than you do, nor do you want to get somewhere with charisma but not be able to sustain it due to lack of character.*" That wisdom has always stayed with me.

2 Corinthians 10:2- *But I beg you that when I am present I may not be bold with that confidence by which I intend to be bold against some, who think of us as if we walked according to the flesh.*

Those who were accusing Paul of walking according to the flesh were the very ones he was prepared to address boldly if necessary. A repeated pattern throughout Paul's epistles is his encouragement for believers not to walk according to the flesh (Romans 8:13). He communicates this same truth in Galatians 5:16-17, reminding believers to walk by the Spirit rather than being led by their flesh.

Paul's desire was for his visit to be one of peace and restoration rather than tension and correction. This would depend on how the Corinthians received both his message and his leadership. Their rejection of Paul may have also been influenced by his natural appearance, which did not demand attention or impress people outwardly.

It is interesting that throughout Scripture, there is a consistent pattern of God using people whom others would often overlook. David was overlooked while tending sheep. Joseph was rejected before stepping into his purpose. Gideon did not appear to be someone others would have chosen. Yet God saw what others could not see.

If you have eliminated yourself from your assignment because you are evaluating yourself through a natural perspective, I want to encourage you to reconsider. If the Lord has instructed you to start a business, step out and begin a women's group, or even travel and impact others, do not remain stuck asking, "*Why me?*" Begin asking, "*Why not me?*"

All your Father needs is someone willing to give Him their yes.

2 Corinthians 10:3- *"For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh."*

This is an expansion of what Paul stated in Galatians 5:16: *"I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh."*

The Greek word for "walk" is *peripateō*, which means to live or to conduct one's life. Although we live in a physical body, our battle is not against the flesh. The Greek word for "war" is *strateuomai*, which means to fight or to contend with. Paul is revealing that our true battle is not against human beings or fleshly circumstances.

In other words, although we live in a physical body and experience the realities of the flesh, our fight is not with the flesh (Ephesians 6:12).

This is a life-changing truth when we truly understand it. Many believers approach life believing their battle is against their coworker, their neighbor, or even their spouse. However, Paul reveals that the battle is much deeper than what we can see naturally.

Paul understood that he could not operate through human strength alone; he needed the power and ability that comes from God. The forces of this present evil age would not deter Paul, and neither would his false accusers. Paul recognized something important: his accusers were not the real problem. The battle was spiritual, and the solution would require spiritual strength.

2 Corinthians 10:4-*"For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds."*

The Greek word for "carnal" is *sarkikos*, which means to be governed by mere human nature rather than by the Spirit of God. Paul was stating that the weapons he used were not physical, militant, or based on human strength. Instead, he relied completely on the power of God (2 Corinthians 3:5-6).

The believer is in a spiritual battle whether we recognize it or not. If we are in a battle, then it is essential that we understand how to fight.

A stronghold is anything that has a strong hold on you. In the next verse, Paul explains the process a believer can walk through that allows the enemy to take them captive.

2 Corinthians 10:5- *casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,*

The word "casting down" is actually a violent term that means to demolish by the use of force. Paul is showing us that there must be an intentional and aggressive approach when dealing with thoughts that oppose the truth of God.

The process the enemy uses to bring a believer into a stronghold can be found in this verse, but we must reverse the order to understand it. The first thing the enemy does is introduce a thought. After that thought comes, we begin to exalt it above what God has said and above His Word.

Then we begin to meditate on it and imagine it, and eventually that thought becomes a stronghold.

For example, a thought may come: *"I am going to repay my coworker for slandering my name."* You then exalt that thought above God's Word, which clearly says, *"Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good"* (Romans 12:21). That thought then moves into your imagination, and you begin to picture how you will get revenge. You imagine gathering other employees, writing an email to their supervisor, and exposing their actions. Before you realize it, the enemy has used a thought to bring you into captivity.

We can see how someone arrives at a stronghold, but the important thing is understanding how to remove ourselves from one. As Paul teaches, the battle is not about fighting people or battling the flesh—the war is taking place in our minds.

The pathway to freedom comes through four E's:

Expose the lie you have believed.
Eradicate that lie.
Exchange it for the truth of God's Word.
Endure in that truth.

Casting down is a violent term because we cannot walk in victory while entertaining lies that contradict God's Word. In the same way you would immediately spit out spoiled milk, we must be just as aggressive with thoughts that are unhealthy and contrary to what God has spoken.

Now, Neresia, are we supposed to do this with every thought? I'm glad you asked—the verse says every thought. If God commands us to do it, then it is possible through His power.

Our mind is the headquarters of our lives. If there are thoughts, conversations, and internal meetings taking place that are not producing life and alignment with God's truth, we must cancel them and bring them into obedience to Christ.

2 Corinthians 10:6- *"and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled;"*

This is an aggressive stance towards anything opposite of God.

2 Corinthians 10:7- *Do you look at things according to the outward appearance? If anyone is convinced in himself that he is Christ's, let him again consider this in himself, that just as he is Christ's, even so we are Christ's.*

Those questioning Paul's authority were only evaluating him from a natural perspective. It is dangerous to evaluate someone's authority, purpose, or message solely based on what can be seen outwardly. What God places on a person is not always revealed through appearance, personality, or natural ability.

How does someone become "in Christ"? This phrase describes the new identity a person receives when they are born again. When someone is born into this world, they inherit a sin nature (Ephesians 2:1-5). However, Jesus entered the scene and declared that we must be born again (John 3:3).

Being born again means that through faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ, we exchange our old sinful nature for a new righteous nature in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). Our identity is no longer defined by who we were in the flesh, but by who we have become in Christ.

2 Corinthians 10:8- *"For even if I should boast somewhat more about our authority, which the Lord gave us for edification and not for your destruction, I shall not be ashamed."*

Paul states that the authority given to him came from the Lord, and it was not given for negative or destructive purposes. His authority was meant for edification—to build people up, not tear them down.

Notice that Jesus operated in the same way. When He approached the woman at the well in John 4, He did not expose her sins to embarrass or condemn her. Instead, He revealed the truth to bring her into freedom and transformation. God does not operate through condemnation; anything that only leaves us feeling shame and hopelessness is not His heart toward us.

Throughout his letters, Paul repeatedly declares that he is not ashamed. I believe one of the keys to fulfilling our purpose in life is refusing to live ashamed and not compromising to place the opinions of others above what the Father has spoken.

There is true freedom when we stop allowing the thoughts and judgments of others to define us and instead find our identity in what God has said about us.

What will your family say if you leave to attend Bible College? What will your spouse think if you begin to pray more and order more books. These questions can be your currently reality and will defuse the moment we exalt what God has spoken to us over anyone else (Romans 3:4).

2 Corinthians 10:9- *"Lest I seem to terrify you by letters."*

The context of this chapter is Paul exposing the perspective of some of those in Corinth. The next verse elaborates more on what he is desiring to convey.

2 Corinthians 10:10- *"For his letters, they say, are weighty and powerful, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible."*

Those opposing Paul were again stating that his appearance did not match his letters. I find it interesting that God often used people that did not meet societies standard of selection.

This proves that all that Paul did and preached was truly the power of God at work.

2 Corinthians 10:11- *"Let such a person consider this, that what we are in word by letters when we are absent, such we will also be in deed when we are present."*

Paul is saying that he will put his actions where his words are. I love Paul's boldness and his unwillingness to shrink back.

What compelled Paul to operate with such boldness? I believe it was his passion, which was driven by his purpose. Purpose is a person's reason for existence, and it is fueled by passion—the driving force that moves them forward.

Passion is not simply what a person is willing to live for; it is what they are willing to die for. We see this throughout Scripture in the lives of Moses, David, Esther, and even Jesus. We also see it in the lives of people like Nelson Mandela and Corrie ten Boom.

Each of them had a purpose that produced a conviction, and that conviction birthed a vision. It was a vision so significant that they were willing to sacrifice everything for it.

2 Corinthians 10:12- *"For we dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves. But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise."*

This is one of my favorite Scriptures in the Bible. How many of us have compared our lives to others? Maybe we desired to get married, but our best friend reached the altar before us. Maybe we longed to have children, yet every sibling in our family has multiple children while we are still waiting.

The word compare in Greek is *sugkrinō* and means to *judge* of one thing in connection *with* another.

This verse reveals how dangerous it is to look to the right or the left and measure our lives by what others are doing. We can observe the lives of others, but we must be careful not to compare our race to theirs.

The moment you become more focused on what the Lord has called you to do, it becomes less enticing to become distracted by what others are doing. This is because your attention becomes consumed with your assignment, your purpose, and your calling rather than someone else's journey.

God did not create us to run someone else's race. He created us to faithfully complete the race He has set before us (Acts 20:24).

2 Corinthians 10:13- *God did not appoint Paul for himself but for the sake of others. Paul understood that his calling was not about personal recognition but about fulfilling the assignment God had given him.*

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Paul was specifically sent to the Gentiles (Ephesians 3:8), and he did not fall short of the assignment entrusted to him. He measured his life according to the purpose God gave him, not by comparison with others.

2 Corinthians 10:14- *"For we are not overextending ourselves (as though our authority did not extend to you), for we came to you with the gospel of Christ not bringing the gospel to a place where it had already been preached."*

The gospel that Paul preached was not merely a message of words, but a message accompanied by power (Romans 1:16). The last thing Jesus promised before ascending was not heaven to mankind, but the power needed to fulfill that mission (Acts 1:8).

Everything Paul preached had the power of God backing it, and because of that, it could not be denied. His ministry was not built on human ability or persuasive speech alone, but on the demonstration of God's power working through him.

2 Corinthians 10:15- *"Not boasting of things beyond measure, that is, in other men's labors, but having hope, that as your faith is increased, we shall be greatly enlarged by you in our sphere."*

The previous chapter focused on finances and generosity, and here Paul is speaking of an increase in their partnership, including their financial support. However, he connects this increase to something deeper—their faith increasing.

Paul understood that true partnership in the Kingdom is not simply about resources; it is connected to spiritual growth and maturity. As their faith grew, their capacity to participate in the work God was doing would also increase.

Jesus speaks about being faithful in that which is least and ties this area to finances (Luke 16:10).

2 Corinthians 10:16- *"To preach the gospel in the regions beyond you, and not to boast in another man's sphere of accomplishment."*

Paul's desire was to continue advancing the gospel into new territories rather than building on what others had already established. His focus was expansion of the Kingdom and reaching those who had not yet heard the message of Christ.

2 Corinthians 10:17- *But he who glories, let him glory in the LORD."*

Paul always gave glory and credit to God!

2 Corinthians 10:18- *"For not he who commends himself is approved, but whom the Lord commends."*

Paul's approval came from God, not from himself or the opinions of others. He understood that true validation does not come from self-promotion but from being approved by the Lord.

Pride causes a person to exalt themselves, but Scripture warns us that "pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall" (Proverbs 16:18). Paul modeled a life that was not dependent on human recognition but on faithfully fulfilling what God had called him to do.