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Father, we thank you that you are faithful for us, that you are good, that you are loving, and that it endures. Father, as we come to you tonight, we ask that your spirit will speak tonight in your word, that you will teach us and correct us and conform us to your image. In Jesus name we pray.

Amen. Welcome back. Tonight, when I pray that the Spirit will speak through us, I literally mentioned it because in that last song, Shawnee came down and asked me why I had chapter 11 program for today. Because we've not yet done chapter 10. And I realized that I have prepared and studied and written the wrong sermon.

I wrote a sermon for a chapter we're not yet to. And so we are going to do chapter 10, and we're going to just see how it goes. So just a reminder, last week where we were in chapters eight and nine, I thought we were in chapters nine and ten, we read about giving, what it is to give or to tithe right. In the New Testament Church, the expectation of God is not that you give out of necessity or compulsion, but you give out of your heart because you want to give, because that's a worship between you and God. And that the eagerness, that desire is what God approves, not the actual.

It's not the giving. It's that desire. And then he. We saw a couple of examples of given the churches in Macedonia, we saw examples that they're given. We saw the prime example of giving given, which was Jesus Christ and how he himself gave from his richness and became poor for our sakes.

And then we also saw giving in Corinth and what they had desired to give, and also the apostles. So that's going to bring us to where we are back in chapter 10. In chapter 10, Paul does kind of back to where he began in the book of Second Corinthians. He kind of digressed a little bit from his initial reason for writing into giving and some other things. And he's now going to circle back to where he began.

Remember why this letter was written. This letter was written because his apostleship was being questioned by the church in Corinth and by others. And he was writing this letter as a means of correcting that and letting people know that even if he himself is human and sinful and fallen, like we all are, the gospel of Christ that he proclaimed is not. So we're going to look at here. My computer froze with my Scriptures.

So there we go, it's back. We're going to look here at the first seven verses. This chapter is one long passage, so I'm going to break it. Let's look not at the first seven, the first six. He says, now I, Paul myself appeal to you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ.

I who am humble among you in person, but bold toward you in action, absent. I beg you that when I am present, I will not need to be bold with the confidence by which I plan to challenge certain people who think we are living according to the flesh. For although we live in the flesh, we do not wage war according to the flesh, since the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but are powerful through God. For the demolition of strongholds, we demolish arguments and every proud thing that is raised up against the knowledge of God, and we take every thought captive to obey Christ. And we are ready to punish any disobedience once your obedience is complete.

This is a great and excellent passage. I love there's two things here that are very important and that I love and I remind myself of all the time. And we'll get there in a minute. So Paul is appealing to Corinth again. He's.

He tells us something about himself. When he's in person, he's gentle and meek. Right? He's not overbearing, he's not over authoritative, he's not super disciplinary. He's gentle, he's meek, kind and humble amongst them.

But then we have these letters, and these letters don't portray a gentle and meek Paul. They portray a very

upset Paul and a very rebuking Paul. Somebody who is. Who seems less gentle and meek just based off of the words. And he is telling them he's not unaware of that difference.

Right. It seems like a different pole. And what he's actually saying is, look, when I come to you, remember in First Corinthians, just to kind of skip back a little bit. Remember when he said, how do you want me to come to you? I can come to you with love and care or I can come to you with an iron rod.

Kind of the same thing going on here. He says, I beg you that when I come, I don't need to be this bold person that I am in my letters. But that I can come back in meekness and gentleness. The whole reason that he's bold in his letters, that he's. I guess we can call harsh in his letters, is because he wants their actual physical time together to be a peaceful, loving, caring and great time.

He doesn't want to spend his time with them, rebuking them. So he writes this letter in a hope that when he comes back that he can continue to be meek and gentle with them. And then look what he says. He says he plans to challenge people who think we live according to the flesh. And I think two things we can look at with that.

And the most obvious thing is that we live in the flesh. And so people think, well, if we live in the flesh, we live according to the flesh, which means we live by what we can see. We live by what we can taste, feel, smell. We fight our battles the way we know how to fight. And then there's the other thing that I don't think Paul has in mind, based on the context of the passage, but maybe is still a possibility, is that when he plans to challenge certain people who think we are living according to the flesh, that Paul is living a sinful life, I don't think that's what he has in mind there.

I think what he has in mind is the way that we fight, the way that we live based on verse three. Remember I said there are two things in this passage I remind myself of all the time. Here's the first. Although we live in the flesh, we do not wage war according to the flesh, since the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but are powerful through God for the demolition of strongholds. So Paul tells us two realities here.

The first reality is we live inside of flesh. And this is a reality that all of us can confirm because we are made of flesh and blood and bone. And if you get cut, you're gonna bleed. If you get pinched, it's gonna hurt. It's obvious that we live in the flesh.

That's the first reality. But the second reality is that we do not wage war according to the flesh. Our enemy is not flesh and blood. The person that we are fighting against that causes, that tempts us, that causes pain in our life that we cannot see is not flesh and blood.

So an example of that that I want to read real quick is Ephesians 6. And bear with me, because like I said, I planned the wrong chapter today.

Chapter six. I'm going to Ephesians 6. I'm going to start in verse 10. And he says, finally, be strengthened by the Lord and by his fast strength by putting on the full armor of God so that you can stand against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against rulers, against authorities, against cosmic powers of the darkness, against evil and spiritual forces in the heavens.

For this reason, take up the full armor of God so that you may be able to resist in the evil day. And having prepared everything to take your stand, Stand therefore, truth like a belt around your waist, righteousness like armor on your chest and your feet, sandalled with readiness for the gospel of peace in every situation. Take up the shield of faith, for which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation. And I'm going to stop right there, right in the middle of a verse real quick, because I want to mention

that all of these are defensive mechanisms that we've read, right?

The belt, the armor, your feet, the helmet, the shield. All defensive weapons, defensive mechanisms. But then look what he says. After taking the shield, he also says, and the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God. So jumping back into Second Corinthians 10, he tells us that although we live inside of our flesh bags, we are waging a spiritual war.

We don't fight against flesh and blood, but we fight against spirits and powers and principalities and darkness, evil and wickedness, right? Things that we cannot see, touch, smell here, invisible things. And he says here in Second Corinthians 10, he says that our warfare, we are powerful through God for the demolition of strongholds. So a couple of things. We are powerful through God, not through ourselves, in ourselves.

We are weak, we are prone to fall. We will fall, we will sin, we will lose the war if we fight it in and of ourselves. But in our weakness, God has made strong. And in God we are powerful. It says, for the demolition of strongholds.

Now, we read about that a little bit just now in Ephesians chapter 6. The way that we fight is not only putting on the armor, but by taking up the word of God, which is our sword. It's our weapon against everything that these unseen enemies can throw at us. The second thing in this passage that I really like and that I remind myself of all the time, he says, we demolish arguments and every proud thing that is raised up against the knowledge of God and take every thought captive to obey Christ.

And in this passage, Paul gives us a little bit of a different sword, as it were, to fight against the evil one. And the way we do it is ultimately the word of God. But we need to understand what he says here. We demolish arguments and every proud thing against the knowledge of God. Remember Corinth, in the first letter we read that he has to rebuke them because of their wisdom, right?

They think that they have knowledge and because they have knowledge, that they are wise and they boast in themselves. And Paul had to rebuke them for that. With that in mind, we understand the argument that he's making here. He says we demolish every proud thing raised up against the knowledge of God. God does what is in our eyes foolish, and we do what's in God's eyes foolish.

But the way God works is not the way we work or the way we would think that he works. Remember when God chose Abraham, he intentionally chose a weak guy. He intentionally chose a small nation so that he could show himself his strength in the weakness of men. When God chose to save us, he chose to do it through the weakness of man. By becoming a man himself.

By becoming a babe, being born of a woman, having to be raised up. Look at the people that he chose to. To carry the gospel. Fishermen, untrained people in the scripture, untrained in the law.

The way things are done in God's way is different than in our way. So he says we tear down. We demolish those thoughts. And those thoughts could be many things. Those thoughts could be that there is no God.

The enemy will tempt you with that thought. He will try and get you to believe what, there's no God at all. What do we do with that? We demolish it. We tear that argument down.

Other arguments against God or I'm wise. I believe in science, not in religion. As if they don't exist together. But they do coexist, exist. It's because of God that we have science.

But we tear down those boastful thoughts that are against God. And here's what he says we do with it. We take it captive to obey Christ. So how do we do that? This goes back to the armor of God in Ephesians 6 that we

just read.

He says our weapon is the Word of God, the sword. So when the enemy says to you, there is no God, you demolish that by taking it captive to the Word of God. And the Word of God says, only the fool says in his heart that there is no God. You could also say that the Word of God says that the very invisible God, the invisible God, is made manifest through the visible creation. For a moment.

Romans 1. The very fact that we are here that the earth is here, that the stars are here, the sun and moon right here is evidence of a God. So you take captive those thoughts and those arguments and those proud things against God to the word of God so that you may obey Christ.

Let's pick up. We're going to look at verses 7 through 11. He says, look at what is obvious. If anyone is confident that he belongs to Christ, let him remind himself of this. Just as he belongs to Christ, so do we.

For if I boast a little too much about our authority, which the Lord gave for building you up and not tearing you down, I will not be put to shame. I don't want to seem as though I am trying to terrify you with my letters. For it is said his letters are weighty and powerful, but his physical presence is weak and his public speaking amounts to nothing. Let such a person consider this what we are in our letters when we are absent, we will be in our actions when we are present.

So again, he's returning to his original reason for writing here, which was his authority, his apostleship, his gospel was being questioned by Corinth and by others, and he is reminding them of the authority that he has. So the first thing, and he will get into this in next chapter a little more, in fact. In fact, I'll look at it just a little bit. He says, look at what's obvious. If anyone's confident he belongs to Christ, let him be reminded.

So do we. This argument here is there may be other apostles or disciples or teachers, whether true or false, who are telling Corinth, no, we belong to Christ. And the argument that they're kind of making is, well, if we belong to Christ, he can't. You can't. You shouldn't follow him.

So Paul says, well, that's ridiculous. Remind them that just as they belong to Christ, so do we. We sometimes see that issue exist today among interdenominational churches, where there's a tendency in a lot of churches to say we're the only true church. There's a tendency in that, and that's not unique to a single denomination. The Catholics will tell you that.

The Catholics will have you believe they are the only means by which you can get to God. The Mormons will have you believe that. They will say, we are the one true, restored church, and the only way to God is through us. The Jehovah's Witness will do that. We are the only one true church, and the only way to be part of the 144,000 is through us.

There's a tendency to do that. And it just so happens that all the denominations I picked are false. But it happens inside of Christian denominations that are true as well. You'll often see this, this happen with independent Baptist churches and free will Baptist churches where there's a tendency in them to declare that only they guard the word of God. Well, Paul is demolishing this argument right now.

And he is saying, look, if they belong to Christ, that's okay, but so do we. Belonging to Christ as. Because it's exclusive in the sense that because we belong to him, we belong to no one else. But it's not exclusive in the fact that if I do, you can't. We can both belong to Christ, and in that same sense, we can both have ministries.

Just because Christ has a pastor in one city doing one thing doesn't mean he cannot have a pastor in another city doing, doing a different thing or even doing different things within the same city. And the people making the argument against that are the people trying to lead the Church of Corinth astray.

And like I said in chapter 11, he touches on that a little bit.

I'm scrolling through chapter 11 real quick so I could read that to you.

Here's where Paul touches on this just a little bit. He says in chapter 11, he says, if in whatever anyone dares to boast, I'm talking foolishly, I also dare. Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites?

So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I. Are they servants of Christ? He says I'm talking like a madman, but I'm a better one, with far more labors and more imprisonments and far worse beatings, many times near death.

Now, I'm not going to comment a lot on chapter 11 because we're going to get to that next week, but the argument that Paul began to make in chapter 10 and that he continues to make in chapter 11 is that those who say, don't follow Paul because we belong to Christ or don't follow Paul because we are Hebrew or we are children of Abraham, or whatever Paul says, says those arguments, they are strongholds against God. Those arguments are designed to distract and to pull away from God.

I got to scroll back to where we are in chapter 11 now. Sorry. So he says, if I boast about my authority, I will not be put to shame. This whole letter is a boast about Paul's authority. This entire letter is his argument as to why they should trust him, why they should trust the message and the gospel that he brings.

And look what he says about his Authority. This is important not just for 2000 years ago, but today. He says, the authority that God gave me, that the Lord gave me, is for building you up and not tearing you down.

A lot of people today who hold authority, whether that was given to them by God or they got it through deceitful means. A lot of people today who hold authority, and even then, they hold it over you. They lord it over you as if their authority is to tear you down. Paul is reminding them. He says, look, this authority that I have, that I use and that I exercise over you, it's not.

Not for tearing you down, but it's for building you up. And any church leader should recognize that the authority that Christ gives them is not for the tearing down of people, but it's for building them up. Look at who Paul's talking to. This is Corinth, where they were eating meat, sacrificed to idols within their temples, where they were accepted men sleeping with their mother, where they were practicing all of these heathen rites. And look at the way that Paul writes to them.

We saw his whole first letter already. Nothing he wrote was to tear them down. Nothing he wrote was to belittle them, but everything he wrote was for their correction, for their upbringing, that they could be delivered to God and his kingdom. We often forget that about our authority, though, and often, especially when it comes to dealing with sin, use our authority for the tearing down and not building up. So Paul tells us and reminds us, authority is for the building up and not the tearing down.

And then he says this. He says, I don't want you to think that I'm trying to terrify you, you with my letters. But at the same time, he says, just note the same.

The same.

The same boldness that I'm writing to you with the same fierceness if you don't repent, if you don't correct this, we will come with the same fierceness he's recognizing, as we saw in the first verse. He tends to be gentle and meek in person and bold in letter. But he's also telling them, don't be mistaken. I will come with this same boldness, with the same fierceness if you don't repent. But at the same time, he's not right in to strike fear into them, but he's right in to correct them in a hope that they will repent, that they will turn back to God and turn

away from these sinful things that they are doing.

Let's finish this chapter off. We're going to pick up in verse 12. We'll go through the end, he says, for we don't dare classify or compare ourselves with such some who commend themselves, but in measuring themselves by themselves and comparing themselves to themselves, they lack understanding. We, however, will not boast beyond measure, but accord unto the measure of the area of ministry that God has assigned to us, which reaches even you. For we are not overextending ourselves as if we had not reached you since we have come to you with the gospel of Christ.

We are not boasting beyond measure about other people's labors. On the contrary, we have the hope that as your faith increases, our area of ministry will greatly enlarge so that we may preach the gospel to the regions beyond you without boasting about what has already been done in someone else's area of ministry. So let the one who boasts boast in the Lord, for it is not the one commending himself who is approved, but the one the Lord commanded amends. So back to Paul's main point here. There are other people who have come in after Paul and they're telling people they're bringing into question Paul's authority, into question his ministry and his gospel.

And then they are taking credit for the ministry of Paul on themselves. So this is what Paul was saying first. He says, look, we don't classify our compare ourselves against other people. Paul defines his ministry and his success as obedience to God and in what God has told him to do, not against how many people has he preached to compared to how many people I've preached to? Success is not.

And this is. We need to all understand this, whether you're a pastor, a leader, a parent, or none of those, and just a person. And there's no such thing as just a person. But what we need to understand is success is not defined by how many people you've seen saved, how many people you've baptized, how many times you share the gospel, or even how many times you've done it compared to your neighbor. Success is defined by whether or not you obediently follow the call of God.

And if you do that, you are successful. We've seen in the Bible there are people who preach their entire life and reach millions of people, and then people who preached their entire lives and reached absolutely no one and they were equally successful. So Paul says, we don't compare ourselves with these people. And if you feel the need to compare yourself against people, and here's what Paul says, he says, by measuring themselves by themselves and comparing themselves to themselves, they lack understanding. If you feel the need to compare and to boast, and especially to boast about work someone else has done as your own, you lack understanding, he says.

And so he says that if he boasts, it will not be outside of that in which he has done. He will not boast about what someone else has done. And he says, and when we boast in you, we're not overreach. And it's not like we didn't actually go there and share the gospel with you and do work with you. You.

And so in a way, he is now comparing himself against these other people, but he's not comparing himself against them as well. They've reached 100 people and I've reached 1,000. He's comparing himself against them rather than showing true leadership versus false leadership. We've been there. You know, we've been there.

And so when, when I write to you, when I instruct you, when I brag about you guys and our love for you, it's not as if it's overextended. So compare that. You know that the people who are taking credit for what we've done there and bringing our ministry into question, you know, they didn't come here and preach to you and bring you the gospel. So his hope by doing this is showing them again, reassuring them of the authority that he does carry of his ministry and the gospel that he preached to them. And then he ends this here with saying that he

has faith.

He has a hope that as their faith enlarges, the ministry will grow. And that's the hope of their minister. Right? The hope of my ministry and anyone else's ministry is that it doesn't end with sharing the gospel with you and you receiving Christ, but that it grows beyond that. And because your faith is increased, an increasingly more amount of people are saved, even through your efforts.

And then he ends this chapter. And this is where we will end tonight. If you boast, boast in the Lord.

We have no room to boast. What can I boast in? Can I boast that I'm a good person? I don't think so. I know all the things that I have done wrong, all the sinful things I've done.

And I know there's much more I'm probably not aware that I've done. So I cannot boast that I'm a good person. Can I boast that I am entering heaven? Not unless the boast is that Jesus Christ paid for my sin and that I'm telling people, yeah, I'm entering heaven because of him and the work that he did. But I cannot boast and say that I've earned it, that I've deserved it, or that I've paid for it.

So if you are going to boast, boast in the Lord, boast in what he has done. And that's easy to do. Boasting in the Lord is as simple as telling people, hey, Jesus saved me, he paid for my sins. He became poor for the sake of making me rich.

All of the boasting is in Him. And he warns us, if you are commending yourself, you are not a proof, but the one who is approved is the one that the Lord commends. So as we come to an end tonight, I, you know, just because I feel. I don't know how clear I've been with preparing for a different chapter. But Paul appeals here, anchoring, going all the way back to his original reason for emphasizing on his authority and the nature of his ministry.

Paul does in a way compare himself. He contrasts his humble presence with his boldness in his letters and urges them to recognize and urges us to recognize, even though we live in the flesh, we are fighting a spiritual war. He asserts authority is not meant for destruction, but edification and building up, and encourages Corinth and us to be obedient. And he also addresses criticism that's addressed toward him by other people. And instead of comparing himself to others, he does and teaches us to focus on the ministry assigned either to him or to ourselves, and express in hope and boast in God.

Right? True commendation comes from the Lord.

So let us be aware that we're not the only Christians.

It's not exclusive just to us, but there are other denominations and groups that do have Christ. There are also the ones that don't. But let us also not compare our lives to our neighbor or our family members or our friends or co workers or even amongst ourselves, but in our obedience to God. And let us not remember that the reason we can boast in God is because of what he did for us. And so if you cannot boast in the Lord today, if he has not done that for you yet, let him.

He's already done the work. You just need to ask him for it to receive Him. And you can do that by admitting that you are not, that you're not perfect, you're not a good person, but that you're a sinner. By believing that the Creator of heavens and earth came in the likeness of us, lived among us, died a death that we deserve, and rose again and confessing him as your Lord and your Savior. And if you can do those things.

If you can ask him, just say, lord, I confess you and I ask for you. You can have this gift. You can experience and taste life, and you can boast in the Lord. If you're ready to do that, I'll invite you to verbalize that confession

with me in our closing prayer. Immediately follow.

We will partake of communion. So I invite everyone to stick around and partake in that with us. And then I'll see everybody else here on Wednesday at 6:30 as we continue our study through the book of Luke. Let's pray. Father, I admit that I'm a sinner, that I'm not a good person, that I'm not righteous, that apart from you there's nothing good in me.

And Father, I believe that the creator of the heavens and the earth and all things that are inside of them, that he became in the likeness of man and lived among us and died for us and rose again. And Lord Jesus, I confess you as my Lord, my God and Savior, and I will follow you. And I ask you, Lord, for this free and precious gift. I ask you to do for me what you have done for others and to give me eternal life and to give me a renewed hope in you. Father, I pray that we will obediently follow you.

I pray that our success will be measured in obedience to you and not according to what others have done. And I pray, Father, for. For me and others in leadership, that we remember and properly exercise the authority you have given us for the edification of your church and not the destruction of it, that you will be glorified. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.