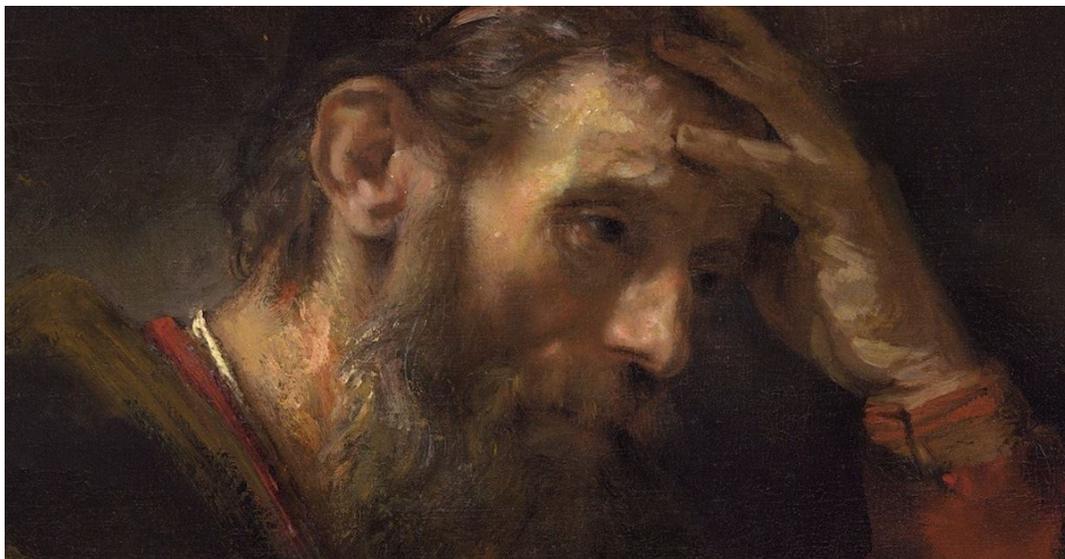


2 Corinthians 10-11

Paul Gets a Little Defensive

The Big Idea

In the last four chapters of 2 Corinthians Paul walks a delicate line between servile humility and defensive boldness. In these chapters we learn more of Paul's biography than any of his other writings. We will see that his call to ministry was not without interpersonal and intrapersonal conflict. Paul continues the theme of pointing us toward the Lord rather than evaluating Paul at a human level.



Have you ever had an instance of personal suffering in which the Lord brought you strength? Perhaps an illness, divorce, loss of job or other life challenge. How did you find the Lord's presence? Could this (or did this) become a resource for your ministry or service to others?

Summary of 2 Corinthians to this point: In chapters 1-7, Paul instructs the Corinthian church to keep the overarching story of the Gospel in mind as they "judge" Paul and others. Though Paul may not have the highest in worldly credentials, he does not need them. Ministry is about God's glory, not human glory. By the time we reach chapter 7 it appears that a reconciliation has been achieved between Paul and the Corinthians, with the help of Titus and another letter that Paul wrote to the Corinthians. Chapters 8-9 are an encouragement to generosity for a gift to the poor, Jewish Christians in Jerusalem. Chapters 10-13 Paul turns a sharp invective against his opponents.

2 Corinthians 10:1-6 Is Paul bold or puny?

Paul has to walk a narrow line between being abrasive and gentle—why do you think he feels this tension? Paul speaks in “spiritual warfare” terms in this passage—what are the spiritual battles that Paul is facing?

2 Corinthians 10:7-11 You’ll post anything on social media, but in person....?

What perception do the Corinthians have regarding Paul’s demeanor in his letters vs. in person? What does Paul say the reality between his letters vs. in-person conduct?

2 Corinthians 10:12-17 Who sets the limits?

In vs. 12 we get a hint of a larger issue at hand—to whom do you think Paul is referring? What are the boundaries that God has established? What is the “sphere of action” for Paul?

Earlier in the book Paul directs the Corinthians to avoid using worldly measures in evaluating Paul’s value to the church. What seems to be happening amongst some other apostles and ministers? Has the rift between Paul and the other apostles been bridged the way the rift between Paul and Corinthians seems to have been repaired?

2 Corinthians 11:1-6

What is the “foolishness” that Paul is indulging in? To what has the Corinthian church fallen prey?

What does Paul call his opponents in v. 5. Why do you think Paul used that peculiar term? What is Paul’s disadvantage compared to his opponents?

2 Corinthians 11:7-15

Remember that the system of patronage relies heavily on gift giving. If you receive a gift, you’re now obligated to the donor in some way. Why do you think Paul accepted personal support money from Macedonia and other churches, but not from Corinth? How has Paul’s humility placed him at a disadvantage?

To what (whom) does Paul compare his opponents to? Do you think it’s fair of Paul to make such an outrageous comparison? Why is Paul’s rhetoric so sharp compared to the earlier chapters in this letter?

2 Corinthians 11:16-21 Who is really inconsistent here?

The Corinthians blame Paul for being inconsistent—what does Paul blame the Corinthians of doing/putting up with?

2 Corinthians 11:22-33 Paul’s Resume

How does Paul’s resume stack up against others? What does Paul think as the real confirmation of his boasting?

What have you learned about Paul? When it comes to how you stack up against others, how do you measure your worthiness?