



Spiritual warfare- Part 02

2 Corinthians 10:1-6, *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.* 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.* 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 carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds,* 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,* ⁶*and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.*

1. Compassion.

An effective soldier is compassionate.

He is compassionate.

The best soldiers only use deadly force when they are absolutely required to!

That the best soldiers are tender and sympathetic and have a heart for people and find no joy or satisfaction in destroying life in bloodshed, in carnage.

A great soldier may be a soldier of great power and boldness, but it is constrained by his compassion so that it is exercised only when there is no other option.

V 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.*

Take the word “now” for a moment. It signifies a break in thought. This sets off the final section.

Paul finished talking about the offering, the offering was a very specific matter. He finished with a crescendo benediction, “Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift.” That was a fitting way to conclude that theme, and now he turns to the final subject.

“Now” signifies the introduction of the final section.

What had been questioned was his authority.

What had been questioned was his right to speak for God.

His credentials were under attack and dispute. His apostleship was under assault.

People in the church have reaffirmed that he is the apostle who speaks with integrity and authority.

Having had that reaffirmation, he does just that here and says, “I, Paul, myself urge you.” He puts himself right in the place of authority.

It is his authority as an apostle of Jesus Christ with which he speaks. He does not have to get his authority apart from the Lord.

He was the spokesman of God with the gospel of Jesus Christ. He asserts the authority that they now have affirmed is genuinely his.

Paul does not have to look somewhere else for the authority like the false preachers who supposedly had some letters from Jerusalem.

Now I, Paul, myself am pleading with you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ-

parakaleō, translated as plead/beg.

I am begging you to end this rebellion.

I am begging you for real peace.

He has no desire to see blood spilled. He has no desire for an open conflict. He gets no satisfaction out of carnage. He is patiently compassionate. He has waited in patience. He is going to wait some more. He is going to send a letter and wait a few months more to give them opportunity to repent.

A great soldier is not vicious. He is not full of venom and hate. He is not full of anger.

A great soldier is not full of revenge. He is first and first a man of compassion. He is a man of meekness and gentleness.

By the way, the word “meekness” refers to the humble and gentle attitude which expresses itself in the patient endurance of offenses.

It means humble and gentle during unfair treatment. The word “gentleness,” almost a synonym. It refers to a patient submission during mistreatment, injustice, in the midst of disgrace, without anger, without malice, without revenge.

Even though you have the power to retaliate, you do not retaliate.

No one more characterized that kind of attitude expressed in those two words than Christ!

No one was more powerful than Jesus Christ and yet no one had a better harness on that power. No one had that power under control better.

Jesus took the almighty power of God to bring about a retaliation on sin and kept it in check and instead exercised patience and endurance.

Paul says, "I want to be like my Lord. I want to be as patient, as gentle, as meek, I want to hold my power in check, my authority in check. Even though you have mistreated me and maligned me and turned against me, I have no anger, no bitterness, no malice.

Even though you have disgraced me and shamed my name and shamed the Lord and shamed the gospel, I want to be patient with you." That is the character of a great soldier.

Jesus Himself exhibits this.

1 Peter 2:19-21, *For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully. ²⁰For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. ²¹For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps:*

God is pleased when you suffer unjustly and endure it. When you do not retaliate, or angry or hate and God is pleased when you endure it.

A level of spiritual nobility when you are mistreated, misrepresented, persecuted, assaulted, slandered, reviled, all the stuff that was happening to Paul. When that happens to you and all you have done is what is right and you suffer quietly and patiently and you endure it, God is pleased.

You might as well learn to deal with it because that's part of being a Christian. You must expect it.

You live counter to the culture. You live as an alien in the world. Everything in the system is hostile toward you. You can expect to be called into unjust suffering. You can expect to be harassed and even persecuted for doing what is right. The society will do that to you in various forms and to various degrees.

You have been called for this purpose.

James 1:3-4, *My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, ³knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. ⁴But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.*

Christ also suffered for you, not only redemptively but to leave you an example for you to follow in His steps. He showed you how to endure unjust suffering.

No one ever suffered as unjustly as Christ.

1 Peter 2:22-23, *“Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth”*; ²³ *who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously;*

Though we still suffer unjustly, we are not perfect. He suffered unjustly and was perfect, which makes His unjust suffering even worse. He sets the example.

What is the example?

While suffering, Jesus uttered no threats.

What did He say on the cross?

Father forgive them.

He uttered no threats, He kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously and quietly bore our sins in His body on the cross.

Paul says,

- I come to you with the same meekness and gentleness of Christ.
- I come to you with forbearing patience.
- I come to you enduring all this terrible slander against me.
- I come to you with leniency.
- I come to you without anger and without malice.
- I come to you patiently.

Paul fully understood the character of His Lord, and he wanted to be just like Him. He knew that the character of His Lord was the standard for all soldiers.

Matthew 11:29-30, *Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.* ³⁰ *For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”*

Matthew quotes the prophecy of Isaiah in the very next chapter.

Matthew 12:17-21, *that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying:* ¹⁸ *“Behold! My Servant whom I have chosen, My Beloved in whom My soul is well pleased! I will put My Spirit upon Him, And He will declare justice to the Gentiles.* ¹⁹ *He will not quarrel nor cry out, Nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets.* ²⁰ *A bruised reed He will not break, And smoking flax He will not quench, Till He sends forth justice to victory;* ²¹ *And in His name Gentiles will trust.”*

Jesus does not come to crush the already bruised. You see a reed that functioned with some purpose. But it has now become battered and useless for that purpose and somebody snaps it and throws it away. Maybe it was used for a flute, as often happened in ancient times.

Then there was a wick that was too small and too charred to give off light, all it did was give smouldering smoke that irritated everybody, and someone would pinch it out and throw it in the trash.

When the Messiah comes, He will not take the bruised reed and break it, He will restore it. He will not take the smoking wick and crush it, but He will give it back its light.

That is what He will do. He is tender and gracious and forgiving and merciful.

In **John 8**, He finds a woman brought to Him who was caught in the act of adultery, and these men caught her in the act of adultery and slammed her on the ground in front of Jesus and said, "We have taken this woman in the act of adultery, what do you think about that?"

Jesus, looking at the woman and looking at them, said, "Whichever of you is without sin, you cast the first stone." The conviction gripped their hearts, and they all went away.

He looked at the woman and said, "No man condemns you, neither do I condemn you, go and sin no more." Forgiveness, magnanimous forgiveness to one who had blatantly disregarded the law of God and engaged in adultery, a sin punishable in the Old Testament by immediate execution.

Jesus was ready to forgive. God is ready to forgive, and you see the patience of God again and again throughout the Old Testament as He pleads with His people in their sins and patiently waits year after year after year, decade after decade, showing how ready He is to forgive.

When the sinners finally come and repent, He embraces them with all the love that a father showed to a prodigal son in the parable in **Luke 15**.

Even in Jesus' most scathing and blistering condemnation against religious leaders, Matthew 23, it ends with His compassionate heart.

Matthew 23:37-39, *"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! ³⁸ See! Your house is left to you desolate; ³⁹ for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!' "*

A noble soldier, a great soldier, a soldier who will win the spiritual warfare is compassionate.

As for the Corinthians, sadly, they saw his compassion as weakness. They put the spin on his compassion, his tenderness, his patience, his endurance, his kindness as weakness.

Paul refers to that when he says in verse 1.

V 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.*

He is simply repeating their accusation. This is sarcasm.

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

Face to face, he is a coward, he does not have any courage, he will not face the issue.

Paul is a weakling when face to face with you.

When face to face with them, Paul was compassionate, and he was tender, and he had a healthy humility.

1 Corinthians 2:3, *“I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling.”*

In his humanity, he had no confidence.

In his own physical ability, no confidence.

In his own philosophical capabilities, his own mental and intellectual abilities, his own wisdom, he had no confidence.

They took that sound and spiritual humility, that lack of confidence in his own person, and twisted it into a negative. They accused him of being cowardly and weak. They were like those false teachers were like the nation of Israel who expected the Messiah to come riding in on a white horse, killing Romans.

When Jesus came into the city riding on the donkey, it was more than they could conceive, and eventually they executed Him because they expected the Messiah to come in kingly dignity and power.

If Paul was this great authority from God, this great apostle, what is he doing sort of shuffling around here with all this humility?

Paul was patient and he was compassionate.

Paul was a pleader.

They were misunderstanding his compassion when he was there. They were misunderstanding his boldness when he was away, and they used this to accuse him. This is a very clever accusation because no matter what you say, it is very hard to answer.

How do you defend yourself?

No matter what he says, it could confirm their accusation.

If he says he is strong, they will say, “he has his times of strength.”

If he says that he is humble and compassionate, they can use that to confirm their assessment.

So, he has to deal with it very carefully and he does in this section. This section then welds strength to weakness. It mingles them. He talks about power in the midst of humility in this section. He talks about the power of God in frail humanity. He talks about being the tender warrior, about being the compassionate soldier.

2. Courageous

Paul is not only compassionate, but he is courageous.

V2, 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.

He is not weak.

When all attempts at compassion are exhausted,
when all efforts at patience are eliminated,
when the only thing left is to protect the truth from unrepentant, unrelenting rebels, he will fight to the death.

When only confrontation preserves truth,
when only confrontation secures the church,
he will charge into the battle fiercely.

You want severity, you will get it.

He who, on one occasion withstood Peter to the face, Galatians 2 says. I withstood him to the face because he was to be condemned. Peter. Peter, the primary apostle, and Paul went face to face and condemned him.

The record of this man’s courage fills the book of Acts, starting with chapter 13.

His courage against

- Courts,
- Councils,
- Governors,
- Kings,
- Religious leaders,
- Authorities,
- Crowds, and

➤ Mobs.

He is not weak. When all attempts at compassion are exhausted, he comes loaded with arms.

Paul was urging them to repent.

Paul is urging the remaining rebels to repent and believe the gospel so that he does not have to be bold.

Paul in other words saying that if you want to see my courage, I will show it. Do not force me to display the confrontational courage I can demonstrate if I am required to do so.

He readily admits to having a warring attitude when called for.

The confidence, literally the word for conviction. I have convictions. I have very strong convictions.

Paul has the courage of his convictions.

The second word there, the word translated “to be courageous,” *tolmaō*, literally means to be daring.

To act without fear regardless of consequences. It is literally to abandon yourself, without regard for personal safety, to disregard any personal safety or preservation.

Fearless. He says I am resolved that if it is called for, I will act with whatever aggression is necessary. I will go to battle with whatever force is required, fearlessly, daring to put my life on the line.

Here is the beautiful picture of a tender warrior, a man of immense compassion. But when a fight must be fought, he is in the front line fighting it.

1 Corinthians 4:19, *But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord wills, and I will know, not the word of those who are puffed up, but the power.*

If you want to fight, he will give it to you.

2 Corinthians 13:10, *Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the authority which the Lord has given me for edification and not for destruction.*

V2, *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.*

The remaining leftovers of the rebels who are still in the church. False teachers and those who silently went underground, or their glowing embers were hidden off in a corner somewhere. The

people who are still rebels in their heart and have not yet bowed the knee to the gospel and to the apostle.

What was their accusation?

The same things against Paul.

He operates according to the flesh.

Walking according to the flesh, who lives their daily life according to the flesh. The flesh is unredeemed humanness. It is synonymous with sinful desire, personal motivation for pride's sake.

Those people still there who say Paul is a fake, he operates out of the flesh, and he is purely motivated by self-interest. He is motivated by corrupt desires.

They said he was a fake.

They said he was corrupt inside, selfish, indulgent, self-serving, unauthorized, worldly motivated, sought only money.

They said he was motivated to live for greed and lust and immorality.

That is what they were saying about him. Terrible things.

Repeatedly in the early part of the epistle, in the first seven chapters, he defended himself against those attacks.

2 Corinthians 1:12, *For our boasting is this: the testimony of our conscience that we conducted ourselves in the world in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom but by the grace of God, and more abundantly toward you.*

2 Corinthians 2:17, *For we are not, as so many, peddling the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as from God, we speak in the sight of God in Christ.*

2 Corinthians 4:2, *But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.*

2 Corinthians 7:2, *Open your hearts to us. We have wronged no one, we have corrupted no one, we have cheated no one.*

Paul has already defended himself against it, but there is the core of the conspiracy right there.

They accused him of being rotten inside.

He said those are the people I am going after when I get there.

I do not want to come with guns blazing.

I do not want to come armed for war.

But if the rebels are not gone or have not repented when I arrive, it will be war.

I am compassionate like God, like Christ, but there comes a point at which the enemy becomes impregnable and entrenched and it's time for battle.