

**1213 Warfare, sin, acceptance, mix of right and wrong, discernment - 2Co(10)1-(11)15
(by Whirlwind)**

First, we discussed how Christians do not wage war according to the flesh; we saw that when Paul had something to say, he spoke it out, yet this did not alter his humble nature. Second, we addressed the consistency between Paul's words and actions, and we saw how God, through His absolute sovereignty, forgave the harlot Rahab and some of David's sins. We must recognize that we cannot afford the price of sin, so we must not sin. Third, we discuss that what is acceptable is what the Lord approves of, seeing how Paul spent his entire life laboring for the Great Commission to reach the ends of the earth. Fourth, he warn the church not to lose a pure and clean heart, seeing how Satan and his servants—just as they do today—used messages mixing truth and falsehood to tempt Eve, and we discuss that God is a avoiding evil God, even to the point of wrath. Finally, it speaks of Paul's selfless preaching of the gospel to the church in Corinth, showing that Satan and his servants will disguise themselves as angels of light, so we must be discerning.

Please note that this article is an expansion of the topicwise Bible study held on Sunday (10/25/26). Unless otherwise specified, verses refer to those in NASB95. If this article refers previous articles, they can all be found on our website, '<https://a-christian-voice.com/>'; click on 'Understanding Spiritual Life'.

1. Christians do not fight according to the flesh

"Now I, Paul, myself urge you by the meekness (G4236, noun) and gentleness of Christ—I who am meek when face to face with you, but bold (G2292) toward you when absent! I ask that when I am present I need not be bold with the confidence with which I propose to be courageous against some, who regard us as if we walked according to the flesh. For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, and we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete.

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. 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."(2 Corinthians 10:1-8)

According to Strong's Concordance, the word "meekness (G4236)" appears nine times, and its meaning is very clear. It is important to note that it is a noun, and its root is "meek (G4235, adjective)," which is what Jesus Himself said: "...I am gentle and humble (G4235=G4239, meek, adjective) in heart, ..." (Matthew 11:29). Here, Paul is saying that he possesses the same humble nature as the Lord. This is not, as many people assume, that a humble person feels inferior in every way, but rather a genuine self-awareness—a humble nature that cannot be feigned. The New Testament makes it very clear that when it is time

to speak up, one must do so—just as Paul did in Antioch when he spoke up to Cephas (Peter) and rebuked him to his face (see Galatians 2:11-21). We can see from Peter's subsequent words that it was indeed the right time to speak up. Peter said, "...our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction." (2 Peter 3:15-16) Therefore, the fact that Paul spoke what needed to be said at that time did not alter his humble nature.

He then spoke of a bold matter—something he had said before: "What do you desire? Shall I come to you with a rod, or with love and a spirit of gentleness?" (1 Corinthians 4:21) In fact, he would not return until they were obedient, for the Scripture makes it very clear: "...we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete." (2 Corinthians 10:6) This was also the news of their true repentance that Titus brought back, just as the Scripture says: "His affection abounds all the more toward you, as he remembers the obedience of you all, how you received him with fear and trembling." (2 Corinthians 7:15) That is why it is said that Titus was the catalyst for his writing of the Book of 2 Corinthians.

It goes on to say, "...though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh." (2 Corinthians 10:3) Their basis is this: "for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ." (2 Corinthians 10:4-5) Does this mean, then, that everyone is saved every time the gospel is preached? No. We can see this from this verse: "Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Brethren, what shall we do?'" (Acts 2:37) Although everyone heard the same truth, not everyone was pierced to the heart. Therefore, even though all those strongholds have been demolished, there are still some whose hearts are hardened and refuse to accept it. One must have ears to hear and be willing to act, just as this Scripture says: "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." (Revelation 3:22) We also see that God granted them signs and wonders to confirm His message of grace (cf. Acts 14:3). It must be made very clear that signs and wonders are only meant to confirm His message of grace; we must not base our faith on them, because if we do, one day when there are no signs and wonders, we will no longer be able to believe. What we must pursue is to have life.

Finally, it says, "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." (2 Corinthians 10:7). When we discuss 2 Corinthians 11:23-29, Paul will make it very clear how he is a servant of Christ, so we will address that then. "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." (2 Corinthians 10:8) One aspect of this authority is "...in order to offer ourselves as a model for you, so that you would follow (G3401) our example." (2 Thessalonians 3:9) He reiterated this: "For this reason I am writing these things while absent, so that when present I need not use

severity, in accordance with the authority which the Lord gave me for building up and not for tearing down."(2 Corinthians 13:10)

2. Paul's consistency between words and deeds

"for I do not wish to seem as if I would terrify you by my letters. For they say, "His letters are weighty and strong, but his personal presence is unimpressive and his speech contemptible." 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. For we are not bold to class or compare ourselves with some of those who commend themselves; but when they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are without understanding. But we will not boast beyond our measure, but within the measure of the sphere which God apportioned to us as a measure, to reach even as far as you. For we are not overextending ourselves, as if we did not reach to you, for we were the first to come even as far as you in the gospel of Christ."(2 Corinthians 10:9-14)

From the very beginning, he stated that his words and deeds are consistent; a Christian would not knowingly and willfully sin by lying, just as the Scripture says: "You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin. No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him."(1 John 3:5-6) If a Christian knowingly and willfully lies and sins, he knows that at that moment he is not in the Lord. At such a time, repentance is necessary: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."(1 John 1:9)

At this point, someone might ask, "Didn't Rahab, the harlot, lie knowingly and willfully?" Look at what the Scripture says: "And the king of Jericho sent word to Rahab, saying, "Bring out the men who have come to you, who have entered your house, for they have come to search out all the land." But the woman had taken the two men and hidden them, and she said, "Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they were from. It came about when it was time to shut the gate at dark, that the men went out; I do not know where the men went. Pursue them quickly, for you will overtake them." But she had brought them up to the roof and hidden them in the stalks of flax which she had laid in order on the roof. So the men pursued them on the road to the Jordan to the fords; and as soon as those who were pursuing them had gone out, they shut the gate."(Joshua 2:3-7) Yes, she knowingly told a lie for the Lord's sake, but what God valued was her faith, just as this Scripture says, "By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish along with those who were disobedient, after she had welcomed the spies in peace."(Hebrews 11:31) For "Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of His godly ones."(Psalm 116:15) God, in His absolute sovereignty, forgave her sin of lying.

This is just as He forgave David's capital offense—when David committed adultery and "...have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword, have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the sons of Ammon."(2 Samuel 12:9) At that time, "...David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD." And Nathan said to David, "The LORD also has taken away your sin; you shall not die.""(2 Samuel 12:13)

David was a man after God's own heart, as the New Testament makes very clear: "After He had removed him, He raised up David to be their king, concerning whom He also testified and said, 'I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My heart, who will do all My will.'" (Acts 13:22) This is what the Old Testament says: "Samuel said to Saul, "You have acted foolishly; you have not kept the commandment of the LORD your God, which He commanded you, for now the LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. But now your kingdom shall not endure. The LORD has sought out for Himself a man after His own heart, and the LORD has appointed him as ruler over His people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you." (1 Samuel 13:13-14)

David was the man after God's own heart long before his commitment of that sin. After David committed that sin, as we mentioned earlier, "Precious in the sight of the LORD Is the death of His godly ones." (Psalm 116:15) Because he was a man after God's own heart, God, in His absolute sovereignty, forgave his capital offense; yet he paid a heavy price for his sin (see 2 Samuel 12:7-14). This absolutely does not mean it is acceptable to commit such sins. On the contrary, even a man whom God described as "after His own heart"—even David—paid such a grievous price for his sin. We cannot afford the price of sin; therefore, do not sin. Please note that Rahab, too, first had faith and was willing to lay down her life for that faith.

Paul said, "But we will not boast beyond our measure, but within the measure of the sphere which God apportioned to us as a measure, to reach even as far as you." (2 Corinthians 10:13). He knew very well, "For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within the church?" (1 Corinthians 5:12) He was their spiritual father, as the Scripture says, "For if you were to have countless tutors in Christ, yet you would not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel." (1 Corinthians 4:15) Therefore, he would say, "For we are not overextending ourselves, as if we did not reach to you, for we were the first to come even as far as you in the gospel of Christ." (2 Corinthians 10:14) When he wrote the Book of 2 Corinthians, he understood very clearly that he had not overstepped his bounds.

3. What Is acceptable is what the Lord approves

"not boasting beyond our measure, that is, in other men's labors, but with the hope that as your faith grows, we will be, within our sphere, enlarged even more by you, so as to preach the gospel even to the regions beyond you, and not to boast in what has been accomplished in the sphere of another. But he who boasts is to boast in the Lord. For it is not he who commends himself that is approved, but he whom the Lord commends." (2 Corinthians 10:15-18)

Indeed, Paul said, "not boasting beyond our measure, that is, in other men's labors, but with the hope that as your faith grows, we will be, within our sphere, enlarged even more by you." (2 Corinthians 10:15) He also looked forward to the growth of their faith, for Titus had brought news of their genuine repentance. As the Scripture shows, "His affection

abounds all the more toward you, as he remembers the obedience of you all, how you received him with fear and trembling."(2 Corinthians 7:15)

He was well aware of the Great Commission, in which Jesus said, "Go [therefore] and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them to the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have enjoined you. And behold, I am with you all the days, until the completion of the age."(Matthew 28:19-20, Darby) Therefore, the Gospel must be preached to the ends of the earth, and at that time, the ends of the earth were the westernmost reaches of the Roman Empire—that is, Spain.

Paul eventually arrived in Rome while in chains, as recorded in Scripture: "When we entered Rome, Paul was allowed to stay by himself, with the soldier who was guarding him."(Acts 28:16) The westernmost point of the Roman Empire was Spain. The New Testament does not state that he visited Spain, but he certainly had a desire to go there, as the Scripture says: "but now, with no further place for me in these regions, and since I have had for many years a longing to come to you whenever I go to Spain—for I hope to see you in passing, and to be helped on my way there by you, when I have first enjoyed your company for a while."(Romans 15:23-24) He also said, "...For if the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual things, they are indebted to minister to them also in material things. Therefore, when I have finished this, and have put my seal on this fruit of theirs, I will go on by way of you to Spain. I know that when I come to you, I will come in the fullness of the blessing of Christ."(Romans 15:27-29) He eventually arrived in Rome as he had hoped, but he was in chains not as he desired; the New Testament does not mention that he went to Spain, nor is there any other evidence to suggest that he did.

"To the ends of the earth" refers to what he said: "so as to preach the gospel even to the regions beyond you, and not to boast in what has been accomplished in the sphere of another."(2 Corinthians 10:16) He knew very well: "But he who boasts is to boast in the Lord. For it is not he who commends himself that is approved, but he whom the Lord commends."(2 Corinthians 10:17-18) He did indeed spend his entire life laboring for the Great Commission, and he humbly made this clear: "Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."(Philippians 3:12-14)

4. Warning the church not to lose a pure and blameless heart

"I wish that you would bear with (G430) me in a little foolishness; but indeed you are bearing with me. For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, so that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin. But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ. For if one comes and preaches another Jesus whom we

have not preached, or you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you bear this beautifully. For I consider myself not in the least inferior to the most eminent apostles. But even if I am unskilled in speech, yet I am not so in knowledge; in fact, in every way we have made this evident to you in all things."(2 Corinthians 11:1-6)

First, let's look at the word "bear with" (G430). It does not mean "tolerance" as translated in Chinese Union Version, but rather calls for people to be patient with one another as said here. According to Strong's Concordance, this word appears 17 times. Since Greek does not have a comparative form, two occurrences are equivalent to a comparative. This word sometimes appears twice; its meaning can be seen in this typical passage: "And Jesus answered and said, "You unbelieving and perverted generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with (G430) you? Bring him here to Me.""(Matthew 17:17)

He said, "For I am jealous (G2206, verb) for you with a godly jealousy (G2205, noun); for I betrothed you to one husband, so that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin. But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ."(2 Corinthians 11:2-3)

Let us first consider how the serpent tempted Eve: "...the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, ..." (Revelation 12:9). He used a message that mixed truth with falsehood, namely, "The serpent (Satan) said to the woman, "You surely will not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."" (Genesis 3:4-5) The LORD God had commanded Adam as follows: "...From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die." (Genesis 2:16-17) Since God had commanded only Adam, Eve learned of this from Adam and developed a misunderstanding. The serpent first reinforced Eve's misunderstanding and then tempted her with mixed messages of right and wrong. What was true was that their eyes were opened; as it says, "Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings." (Genesis 3:7) What was false was that they could not know good and evil as God does; as it says, "Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, ..." (Genesis 3:22)—merely "like us." When she accepted the first correct message, she assumed the second false message was also true, because people often do this. This is why messages that mix truth and falsehood are so dangerous, and why Satan has always used such tactics; we must truly discern.

Let us now consider the former. Please note that the former does not mean "jealousy" in the viewpoint of the human; it corresponds to what is stated in the Old Testament on the very first of many occasions: "You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous (H7067) God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me." (Exodus 20:5) It is understandable that the Chinese Union Version translates this as "avoiding evil" since it needs to be distinguished from the word for "jealous" in the

viewpoint point of the human. The best way to understand this term is likely "jealous to the point of wrath" in God's viewpoint. Paul was concerned about the church in Corinth, fearing that "...your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ." (2 Corinthians 11:3). This concern was not unfounded. Consider what is said to the church in Ephesus in the Book of Revelation: "But I have this against you, that you have left your first love (G26, God's love)." (Revelation 2:4) They had lost the pure and sincere heart they once had toward Christ; therefore, we must always "Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil (Satan), prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour." (1 Peter 5:8)

He then essentially says, "But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!" (Galatians 1:8-9) Preaching a false gospel is a very serious matter. Then he humbly says, "But even if I am unskilled in speech, yet I am not so in knowledge; in fact, in every way we have made this evident to you in all things." (2 Corinthians 11:6) He is simply stating a fact: "For I consider myself not in the least inferior to the most eminent apostles." (2 Corinthians 11:5) Because his knowledge came entirely from God, he understood this very clearly, and he said, "For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ." (Galatians 1:12)

5. Paul preached the gospel of God to the church in Corinth free of charge

"Or did I commit a sin in humbling myself so that you might be exalted, because I preached the gospel of God to you without charge? I robbed other churches by taking wages from them to serve you; and when I was present with you and was in need, I was not a burden to anyone; for when the brethren came from Macedonia they fully supplied my need, and in everything I kept myself from being a burden to you, and will continue to do so. As the truth of Christ is in me, this boasting of mine will not be stopped in the regions of Achaia. Why? Because I do not love you? God knows I do! But what I am doing I will continue to do, so that I may cut off opportunity from those who desire an opportunity to be regarded just as we are in the matter about which they are boasting. For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds." (2 Corinthians 11:7-15)

Paul made it very clear that his principle at that time was to preach the gospel of God to the church in Corinth free of charge, and he was able to do so because other churches supported his ministry. Regarding the support for his ministry, for example: "You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone; for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs." (Philippians 4:15-16) He made it very clear: "and when I was present with you and was in need, I was not a

burden to anyone; for when the brethren came from Macedonia they fully supplied my need, and in everything I kept myself from being a burden to you, and will continue to do so. As the truth of Christ is in me, this boasting of mine will not be stopped in the regions of Achaia."(2 Corinthians 11:9-10) He truly loved the church in Corinth, and so "...what I am doing I will continue to do, so that I may cut off opportunity from those who desire an opportunity to be regarded just as we are in the matter about which they are boasting."(2 Corinthians 11:12)

He clearly stated, "For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds."(2 Corinthians 11:13-15) We must truly understand that Satan and his servants will disguise themselves as angels of light, so we must be discerning. Never assume that just because one message is correct, other false messages must also be true. We must use the Bible to discern which messages are truly correct.