

2 Corinthians 10

Good morning and thank you for joining us. Would you please turn in your Bibles to 2 Corinthians 10?

We will be partaking in communion...

Last week we saw in chapters 8-9 what the Bible has to say about giving.

This morning we pull back the veil on the spiritual realities that shape our lives.

We're only going to study chapter 10, and the title of this morning's message is "Beyond perception"
Let's pray.

Horizon Indy story

See, there are realities and motivations, especially incorrect motivations that can shape not only our viewpoints, but our attitudes, even our lives.

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. The Greek word translated "meekness" means "power under restraint." It's choosing to hold back when it's within your power to act.

Our world celebrates power, authority, and influence, but never meekness. But remember what Jesus said in **Matthew 5:5**
Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

Previously, Paul had approached the Corinthians gently and meekly - but his enemies had misinterpreted his meekness as weakness. They spread lies that Paul's humility was really a lack of ability.

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. The word 'some' tells us that it wasn't all the Corinthian Christians that were leading others astray and were spreading lies about Paul. But there certainly were detractors who were poisoning the minds of others.

3 For though we walk in the flesh we do not war according to the flesh. Notice the harsh reality that as Christians, every one of us are engaged not in a skirmish, or a dust up, or a simple conflict. No we are engaged in an invisible war.

The bible has much to say about this war that we're engaged in. Jesus said **Luke 10:3 "Go your way; behold, I send you out as lambs among wolves.**

John 15:19 "If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

Ephesians 6:12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age,[fn] against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

2 Timothy 3 3 You therefore must endure[fn] hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. 4 No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.

Hey as Christians, none of us are on leave-we're all on active duty. We're to be following the orders of our commander in chief, Jesus, and we're in a war time campaign.

So how do we fight this war?

4 For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, Carnal simply means fleshly, that which is governed under human appetites.

Mighty means incomparable in might-powerful to the utmost measure. The reason that our weapons are mighty is because they are through God.

It's not our own bright ideas, strenuous effort, or crafty manipulation of circumstances, no there is no substitute for the power of the Holy Spirit.

Yet lot's of folks try and use carnal methods to solve their problems. A bank loan alleviates your cash flow crunch, but will it corral the greed that caused your overspending?

A nicotine patch helps with withdrawals, but does it supply the calm you need when you're stressed?

A cold shower will relieve some sexual tension, but how do you conquer the lust that churns in your heart?

A bottle of pills will get you to sleep at night, but will it resolve the guilty conscience that kept you awake?

Human remedies may do some short term good and alleviate the issues temporarily. But spiritual progress and permanent change are the result of the power and intervention of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Notice verse 4 says pulling down. This is only time in the NT this phrase is used. It speaks of completely destroying and demolishing!

Notice too the word strongholds. Not a tent, not a little shack, no it's a stronghold, it's a fortified building, it's walls are high and thick and rooted deep.

SHOW PIC 100 years before this the Romans had torn down the walls of the city of Corinth, where the fortress was high above the city. The Romans used battering rams and catapults to tear down the fortress and walls. The Corinthians knew full well what Paul was saying. **Close pic**

In this war that we are all enlisted in as Christians, we don't have to fight empty handed!

In Ephesians 6 10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age,[fn] against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. 14 Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; 16 above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;

Paul lists the spiritual weapons he used: the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shoes of the gospel, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit. To rely on these weapons takes faith in God instead of faith in man's methods.

Let's read verses 4-5 together

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, Pause here

Arguments-we live in a world that's telling us all the time, everywhere through music, news, and legislation what morality is.

We're surrounded today by things that are exalting themselves against God, telling us what's acceptable for marriage and morality, ramming it down our throat. We live in a world where evolution is rammed down our throat.

There's no such thing as a simple cell. We don't even drive cars from 50 years ago, why do folks listen to Darwin from 200 years ago to a theory that later on he confessed he didn't even subscribe to?

See the problem that non believers have is if they acknowledge creation, if they acknowledge a higher intelligence, then it means we're accountable!

All the wickedness in our world today, it's a fortification, it surrounds us, it's everywhere. Prejudice, bigotry, pride, alcoholism and drugs, lust and lying, these are all fortifications all around us. We have states in our nation where you can possess narcotics, but you cant drink from a plastic straw? You can buy as much whiskey as you want but you can't stock up on cold medicine?

There's a battle going on all around us for hearts and minds and souls. And these battles don't always appear as though from the enemy. Religiosity says do better, be better and kick the other guy down so you look more holy.. But God's grace says none of us are equal, it's only by the blood of Christ.

And every Christian, again enrolled in this warfare, and Satan attacks our minds. He tries to get us to doubt God's word. The

sends numerous temptations our way and tries to get our focus to be all about our selves.

How are we to respond to all of these things that take place?

...5 bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, To battle against this carnal way of thinking and doing, our thoughts must be brought captive and made obedient to Jesus.

I find it fascinating that over the last few years the topic of mental health has exploded. But this isn't new, no the topic of mental health has been addressed by the Bible for 2,000 years! And it provides us with the answers for mental health!

Whenever our minds start to think in carnal ways, we must stop our thoughts, take control over them and transform our thinking.

Romans 12:2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Praise God we are not helpless victims or recipients of our thoughts. We can choose to stop our thoughts and bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. Thoughts of lust, thoughts of anger, thoughts of fear, thoughts of greed, thoughts of guilt.

Sitting in the cold, dark, underground prison, Paul would later write these words.

Philippians 4:8 Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of

good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.

Not only can they be, we must bring our thoughts into captivity to the obedience of Christ. Every so often if I'm counseling someone and I will walk them through these verses, and they will say yes I see and hear what the Bible is saying, but I can't do that. And don't tell me you cannot do it-God says you can. And if you say you can't then you're calling God a liar.

Because I have significant experience in trauma and CISM, I was put in contact with someone helping the Ukraine war/refugee crises...tell story.

Paul now increases the sternness of his tone...

6 and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.

Many commentators think the phrase to punish all disobedience is taken from the Roman military court. It's as if Paul says, "We are all soldiers together in this battle, and I am ready to bring in some discipline among these troops."

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.[fn] Paul had previously warned this church about judging people prematurely, 1 Corinthians 4:5 Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light

the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God.

8-10

8 For even if I should boast somewhat more about our authority, which the Lord gave us^[fn] for edification and not for your destruction, I shall not be ashamed— 9 lest I seem to terrify you by letters. 10 “For his letters,” they say, “are weighty and powerful, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible.” "

There were those in the church who were accusing Paul of being mighty with a pen but wimpy and tongue tied in person. There was probably some truth to this claim. A third century novel entitled, "The Acts of Paul and Hecla," gives an interesting physical description of the Apostle. "Paul was small in size with meeting eyebrows, with a rather large nose, baldheaded, bow-legged, strongly built, full of grace, for at times he looked like a man and at times he had the face of an angel."

In other words, nobody was ever impressed with Paul's physical traits. Other traditions say that Paul spoke with a lisp. As far as Paul's physical features were concerned he was less than impressive to look at or listen to.

And remember, Corinth was in Greece which celebrated both the external physicality and linguistic abilities of teachers and philosophers.

Simply put, physically speaking Paul wasn't very impressive

And this was the problem with the false teachers. They focused on Paul's physical traits instead of his spiritual traits. The Corinthians wanted their pastors to be entertaining speakers. To them, slick was preferable to substance, and they were more impressed by style than truth.

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 writes to his despisers with a warning. "If you want the 'tough' Paul, you will get him. I will come to you with all the sternness I've shown in my letters."

Verse 12 is an important verse

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. Whoever Paul's opponents and critics were among the Corinthian Christians, they certainly thought highly of themselves. But Paul refuses to spend any time comparing himself to these guys.

One of the challenges with ministry is the difficulty in measuring progress. It's not like a business where you just check sales or profit margin. Someone in ministry can be faithful for many years, and not see much results.

Measuring ourselves against other people always does one of two things. It will either puff us up or pull us down. We can always find someone seemingly less spiritual than us. And when we do, we quickly become puffed up by pride.

But we can also find people who are seemingly more spiritual than us. And when we try to copy them, it only leads to frustration because we can't seem to do things the way we think they would.

Comparison is foolish, but many Christians and pastors and churches succumb to the temptation of it. How many people did you have on Sunday? How big is your building? - or budget? - or staff? According to the end of verse 12- this is "not wise!"

If a person feels the absolute need to compare, just have them compare themselves to Jesus. Ultimately, He's the measuring stick.

13 We, however, will not boast beyond measure, but within the limits of the sphere which God appointed us—a sphere which especially includes you. We all have a sphere in which we're to be faithful. And Paul's sphere included the Corinthians.

14-16

14 For we are not overextending ourselves (as though our authority did not extend to you), for it was to you that we came with the gospel of Christ; 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, 16 to preach the gospel in the regions beyond you, and not to boast in another man's sphere of accomplishment.

Why is Paul stressing the point that he has not, and will not, take authority in another man's sphere? Probably because that is exactly what his opponents among the Corinthian Christians did. They tried to boast in Paul's sphere of accomplishment.

But Paul wasn't a glory hound or attention seeker-this is why he says...

17 But "he who glories, let him glory in the LORD."^[fn] Here's a quote from **Jeremiah 9:24 But let him who glories glory in this, That he understands and knows Me, That I am the LORD, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight," says the LORD.**

Often Christians assume successful service means spiritual success. Spend more time and do more stuff and God will be pleased, but not necessarily. According to the Bible true success has more to do with knowing the Lord, than serving the Lord.

And this is why it's so critical that we have many servants in this fellowship. I'm very careful to make sure folks don't serve most of the time. You're serving in this fellowship allows others the opportunity to strengthen their walk.

Martha served Jesus frantically, while Mary sat at Jesus' feet and spent time in His presence. Jesus commended her, "Mary has chosen that good part."

18 For not he who commends himself is approved, but whom the Lord commends. Christians can pat each other on the back, pass out awards, and boast of accomplishments, but all that really matters is when we'll stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ and hear, "Well done good and faithful servant."

It doesn't matter how we testify about our own accomplishments. It doesn't matter what other people may say about our ministry. It's what God says about us that matters and will endure.

We see in chapter 10 if we're struggling, we need to focus on Jesus. If we're being criticized, we need to focus on Jesus. If we have an urge to compare ourselves to others, we need to focus on Jesus. It's literally that simple, yet it's that hard.

COMMUNION IS A WONDERFUL PRIVILEGE BECAUSE IT'S A TIME TO LOOK BACK, TO LOOK WITHIN, AND TO LOOK FORWARD.

We look back, remembering the Lord's death on the cross. His death was more than just an atoning death—it was a substitutionary death. He died in our place so that we might live. He took our sins upon Himself so that we could receive His righteousness **2 Corinthians 5:21 For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.**

We look within during Communion considering, our lives in the shadow of the cross. Are we taking our thoughts captive? Are we resting in the power of the Lord in our lives? Looking within helps us become determined for Christ because we don't serve a bitter king and we don't serve a selfish ruler, we serve Jesus Christ.

Finally, Communion is also a time to look ahead toward the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Paul said in **1 Corinthians 11:26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim**

the Lord's death till He comes. We cannot forget the fact that Jesus Christ is coming back, and we will be with Him for all of eternity.