

Worksheet #9: 2 Corinthians 10:1–18

Summary: After Paul’s warm rejoicing over the Corinthians’ repentance in 7:8–13 and his appeal for the collection of funds in chs. 8–9, it may come as a surprise to find Paul again in self-defense mode in chs. 10–13. In these chapters, he responds to his Corinthian critics in such strong tones that David Garland notes that Paul “pulls out all stops in trying to rally the Corinthians to his point of view and to reject these false teachers who have beguiled and badgered them.”¹

In chapter 10, Paul responds to criticisms that his ministry is “according to the flesh” (10:3) and that his “weak” physical appearance and “contemptible” speech do not correspond to his “weighty and powerful” letters (10:10). Paul responds by observing that his critics criticize his ministry in order to commend themselves (10:12). Rather than boasting, Paul focuses on preaching the gospel and laboring for the growth of others (10:15–16), confident that the Lord will commend his efforts even if others do not (10:17–18).

Abbreviated Outline² (current passage in bold):

- I. Introduction (1:1–11)
- II. Paul’s Relationship with the Corinthians (1:12–2:11)
- III. Paul’s Defense of his Ministry (2:12–7:16)
- IV. The Collection for the Believers in Jerusalem (8:1–9:15)
- V. **Paul’s Renewed Defense of his Apostleship (10:1–13:4)**
 - A. **The Tone of Paul’s Appeal (10:1–11)**
 - B. **Divine Commendation of Paul’s Ministry (10:12–18)**
 - C. Danger of the False Apostles (11:1–15)
 - D. Paul’s Sufferings (11:16–33)
 - E. Paul’s Visions and Revelations (12:1–10)
 - F. Paul’s Miracles (12:11–13)
 - G. Paul’s Final Defense (12:14–13:4)
- VI. Final Exhortations (13:5–12)
- VII. Closing (13:13)

¹ 2 Corinthians, vol. 29, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 418.

² Adapted from Andreas J. Köstenberger, L. Scott Kellum, and Charles L. Quarles, *The Cradle, The Cross, and The Crown: An Introduction to the New Testament* (Nashville, Tenn: B & H Academic, 2009), 484.

Interpretation: *Read through the passage, and then review and make notes under the questions below.*

1. What is Paul's goal for his next visit with the Corinthians, as stated in 10:1–2?

2. What does Paul mean when he admits that “we walk in the flesh” (10:3)? How is this different from “war[ring] according to the flesh” (10:3)?

3. What does Paul identify as the purpose of his apostolic authority in 10:8? How does this undermine the accusations of his critics?

4. What is Paul guaranteeing in 10:11? How does this undercut the criticism he quotes in 10:10?

5. How does Paul distinguish between his opponents (in 10:12) and himself (in 10:13)?

6. Why does Paul have authority over the Corinthians (10:14)?

7. If Paul is only concerned with God's approval (10:18), why does he defend his ministry to the Corinthians in this letter?

Application: *Take time to reflect on the implications of this passage for your own life today.*

8. What does this passage mean for your walk with the Lord?

9. How does this passage challenge the way you think about situations in daily life? What should you do about that?
