

## 2 Corinthians 10:1-6

The opening verses of chapter 10 mark the beginning of the final section of Paul's letter to believers in first-century Corinth. In one sense, the subject of these final chapters is Paul himself, but in another sense the subject is spiritual maturity, how the work of God is to be done, even the very nature of the gospel itself.

### Summary

**In 2 Corinthians 10:1-6, Paul begins the final section of his letter, refuting the charges leveled against him by his detractors.**

#### 1. Threatening Power Struggle

Paul's opponents were most likely professing Christians from a Jewish background, who insisted that Jewish traditions were to be made compulsory for Gentile converts. Paul rightly saw this as a considerable threat, not only to the peace of the churches, but to the gospel itself.

The style of the ancient Sophists had also rubbed off on Paul's detractors. They assumed that a spiritual leader would naturally be someone who sought out the limelight, a person with charisma and flair.

Jewish legalism and the personality cult of the Sophists had been injected into a power struggle in the life of this first-century church.

#### 2. Refuted Cowardice vv. 1-2

Paul's opponents alleged that he was not up to the job of being an apostle. When present in Corinth he was physically weak; he backed down in the face of confrontation, but once he was at a safe distance, he wrote bold letters. Paul refused to let others squeeze him into their mould, however. He had a better role model than the accepted style of leadership in contemporary society. Rather, he appealed to the Corinthians 'by the meekness and gentleness of Christ' (**2 Cor 10:1**).

Paul did not see the need to flaunt a 'macho' style in his dealings with the Corinthians but his normal mildness did not preclude the possibility of decisive action should the situation require it (**2 Cor 10:2**).

This was no mere matter of Paul cultivating a personal following. This was not so much a clash of competing egos as of competing views of the Ministry, even of the gospel itself.

### 3. Alleged Lightweight vv. 2-5

Paul's opponents also seem to have accused him of walking 'according to the flesh'. They meant that he was not half the man that they thought themselves to be. The apostle's response is to admit that, in one sense, he was guilty as charged (10:3); he made no great claims for himself, yet, in the next breath, he begs to differ.

Though he lived in the everyday world, his 'weapons' were not 'of the flesh (10.4). Paul makes use of a military analogy: the work of God is a war against the powers of darkness. He does not mean that his opponents were using tangible weapons whilst he used exclusively spiritual weapons. Rather, Paul makes the stinging accusation that these people had borrowed weapons from the world's armory. Sadly, the same could be said today of parts of the church which has borrowed the methods which are perceived to work in secular society.

Spiritual warfare here is primarily to do with bringing truth to bear on people's minds. The 'strongholds' (10:4) that Paul set out to besiege, were actually value systems, world-views, habitual patterns of thought, proud castles of the mind with the banner of self floating from the ramparts.

For Paul, this had an important bearing on the question of method in the spread of the Gospel.

If tenaciously held world-views were to be undermined, argument and persuasion were vital. His opponents, on the other hand, believed that the battle could be won by parading themselves before an audience.

To Paul, truth was everything. To his detractors, image was everything.

### 4. Suspenseful Conclusion vs. 6

In verse 6 we read of Paul's readiness 'to punish all disobedience' when the 'obedience' of his supporters in Corinth was 'fulfilled'.

Would the Corinthians see sense and repudiate the influential handful that had caused such havoc?

Would they take steps to distance themselves from these men in advance of Paul's arrival?