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SECOND CORINTHIANS 10:1-11:15

We're going to see Paul teach us on a variety of subjects in this lesson today...

- 1) How to Wage Spiritual Warfare
- 2) How to Discern Spiritual Authority
- 3) How to Measure Spiritual Ministry
- 4) How to Express Spiritual Fear
- 5) How to Prove Spiritual Calling

1) How to Wage Spiritual Warfare

Let's get this passage into context before we read it...

There are wars going on all over the world...Bosnia, Kosovo, Northern Ireland, Africa... wars between Serbs and ethnic Albanians, between Protestants and Catholics, between different tribes in Africa, different sects in India and Pakistan...wars abound in our world today... and the enemies in these wars can be seen. We can see the **guns** and the **rockets** and the **planes** and the **bombs**...

but in the warfare Paul tells about in this passage, we have an enemy who is unseen.

This enemy doesn't shoot literal **bullets**, or fire literal **rockets** or drop literal **bombs**...

This enemy comes against us, **constantly**, **invisibly**, with much deceit and cunning.

Ephesians 6:10-12...

"schemes" – "methodeia" – (we get our word, "method") – but in the original Greek it means "cunning arts, deceit, treachery"...

The devil's strategy is a strategy of deceit...and let me just say this...

If all we had to worry about is Satan, it would be bad enough, but these "rulers", and "powers", and "world forces", and "spiritual forces"...NAS

these "principalities", these "rulers of the darkness of this world," this "spiritual wickedness in high places"...KJV **All these terms refer to Satan's army!!**

See, Satan cannot be in two places at the same time. Satan is not omnipresent... but, when Satan fell from heaven, he took one third of the angelic force with him and they have become his army of demons. And, they are bent on your destruction!

These soldiers don't get **furloughed!**

These soldiers don't get **R and R!**

These soldiers don't get **discharged!**

These soldiers are **on the job...around the clock...seven days a week, 52 weeks a year...year after year after year!!**

That's why Paul tells us on down in *Ephesians 6* to be fully armed...

to have our **loins girded with truth**,

to have on the **breastplate of righteousness**,

to have our **feet shod in the preparation of the gospel of peace**, and Paul goes on to tell us

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to take up the **shield of faith**,
to put on the **helmet of salvation**,
to take up the **sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God**,
and then **to pray and petition at all times in the Spirit!**

Paul tells us THAT and then Peter tells us to be on the alert because the devil prowls about "like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour!"

So, we must be **aware of** and we must be **wary of** Satan's schemes...his cunning devices, and his devious and deceitful ways!

Having said all that...turn back to **2 Corinthians 2:11** with me...

The word "schemes" (NAS), "devices" here is a different word: "noema"-
It means "mind, intellect, thought"...

This is the same word used in **2 Corinthians 11:3** and it means the same as the word used in **2 Corinthians 10:5**: "speculations"...

And this was the warfare method that was being waged against Paul when he wrote this letter to the Corinthians.

Beloved, the battle is for our mind!! Satan and his demons work overtime trying to get inside our mind!!

ACTION FOLLOWS THOUGHT!!

The nutritionist tells us we are what we eat...

The psychologist tells us we are products of our environment.

But, God's Word tells us we are what we think!!

"As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he..."

See, if Satan can control your thinking...he can control your actions.

Now, to get back to the lesson before us and to see how all this applies...

Verses 1 and 2...

Paul has been attacked. His ministry was being criticized and maligned. We don't know all that was being said about Paul...He doesn't give us a specific list...

But, we do know from these verses that Paul's critics had accused him of being **one way when he** was away from them and **another way when he was with them**. We also know they had accused him of **walking in the flesh** and of **impure motives!**

Let's see how Paul is going to handle these false teachers who are taking every opportunity to criticize –

Verses 3-6...

Paul takes this criticism and he teaches us a lesson on spiritual warfare...

Here, Paul is saying, "Folks, you can't evaluate things according to the flesh. You must evaluate things according to the Spirit."

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See, the false teachers were **very visible**. They acted **very authoritative**. They threw their weight around. But, Paul didn't emphasize Paul...he emphasized Jesus. The Corinthians were judging between the false teachers and Paul according to what they saw in the flesh...not according to what they saw in the spirit. Satan had attacked their mind!

1 Corinthians 2:14...

"...a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him...because they are spiritually appaised..."

Now, who is the "natural man?" The "natural man" is the **unsaved man!!**

The Bible is saying that the "natural man" does not understand the things of God...so what does Satan do? Satan tries to get the "super-natural" man...the **saved** man who **does** have the Spirit living within him and **does** understand the things of the Spirit...**Satan tries to get the saved man to think like the unsaved man.**

We see this in some churches today...where the services don't differ from the world...the music doesn't differ from the world...Many churches today have become "seeker friendly"...

But in the context of our lesson today,

Paul is saying, "Look, folks...we're not in heaven yet (he heard Bill say that). We're still walking around in bodies of flesh, but we aren't confined to war according to the flesh. We have better weapons in our arsenal than we did before we were saved. Our weapons are **mighty through God!** Our weapons are **divinely powerful!!**"

Why? **Because our weapons were bought for us at Calvary.** Jesus defeated Satan at Calvary...and even though Satan is running around trying to get his toothless jaws into us...he's a defeated foe, but he's still going to do all the damage he can to God's children!! **And, so often he gets us down because we don't use our weapons...we don't put on our armor, and we open up our minds to his deceit!!**

Paul was being maligned. Paul was being unfairly criticized! But, Paul says that he had a divinely powerful weapon! Paul was able, because of the blood of Jesus Christ, to **bring every thought captive to the obedience of Jesus Christ.**

And, the good news for us is that we are able to do that, too!

Beloved, we don't have any choice over the things that Satan hurls against us, but we do have a choice about how we will respond!!

God has called us to wage war...we are to use His mighty weapons of warfare to bring all our thoughts captive to the obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ!

So, what are you going to do when you're attacked by the enemy?
...when you're unjustly accused or criticized for something?
...when your thoughts begin to run wild and you want to retaliate
or even when your old flesh rises and longs to just slip
into sin like it did before you were saved?

WHAT DO YOU DO?

Do you become like the natural man that Satan wants you to be?

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Do you act like you did before you were saved?

Do you use the same old tactics you used before Jesus came into your life?

WHAT DO YOU DO?

Well, you better exercise some “mind control”. You better take every thought captive to the obedience of Jesus Christ!

What’s the old saying? “You can’t stop the birds from flying over your head, but you sure can stop them from building a nest in your hair!”

As Kay Arthur says, “ You can’t stop the devil from knocking on the door of your mind, but you don’t have to open the door and invite him for tea.”

Paul could have **retaliated with strong words!** But, Paul agreed with James that the tongue can get us into all kinds of trouble. Paul could have **lashed out at these critics physically!** But, Paul decided instead to engage in **spiritual warfare**...to take every thought captive to the obedience of Jesus Christ!

Well, we could spend lots more time on this point...but let’s quickly see Paul address some other things.

2) How to Discern Spiritual Authority

(Verses 7-11...)

The false teachers were telling the people that Paul had no authority. They said, “Old Paul...well, he writes a pretty good letter, but he’s really not a very impressive person when you see him up close and personal! **Verse 10**

Paul simply tells the Corinthians in this passage that he is the same in person as he is in his letters. **Verse 11**

Paul is saying again, “Don’t look at things outwardly, folks. These false teachers are attempting to tear you down, but I’m using my authority to build you up.”

(Verses 12-18...)

3) How to Measure Spiritual Ministry

Here we see Paul defending his apostleship and authority yet again...Paul knew the false teachers had made exaggerated claims about themselves to the church at Corinth...

Verse 12 says they were measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves with themselves...but, that’s not the way we should measure ourselves...I mean, we can always find someone who is running ahead of us, and we can always find someone who’s running behind us, can’t we?

To follow up on what we said a minute ago about churches becoming “seeker friendly”...Today, we see pastors who aren’t seeing a great harvest in their churches, and instead of seeking God’s

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face to see what His will is for them, they look at the church down the road, and they decide to try the same things those folks are trying...something “new and different.”

What are these folks doing? **They're measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves with themselves!!**

BELOVED, WHOSE OPINION REALLY COUNTS?

We said last week that if we give to be seen of men, we have all the reward we're ever going to have right here in this life.

By the same token, if we minister to be seen of men, or if we minister to be better thought of than someone else, or if we minister to simply puff ourselves up, we might measure up in man's sight, but we won't measure up in God's sight and we'll have all the reward we're ever going to get right now!

Paul had been called to a spiritual, God-ordained, God-directed, God-blessed ministry. He had taken the gospel to the Corinthians, and as their faith grew, Paul was enlarged, but **any boasting that went on was not for Paul but for the Lord. Verse 17 and 18...**

Chapter 11:1-3...

4) How to Express Spiritual Fear

Paul says to this church, “I love you as a father loves his child.
Just as a father betrothes his daughter to one husband, I have betrothed you to Christ.
and in doing this, I don't want you to come to Him in any way except as a pure virgin.”

And, may I say to you...the very same thing is true of you and me. Have you accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as your own personal Savior? Do you KNOW that you're saved? Well, if you do, this means, like the Corinthians, you have been betrothed to Jesus. One day Jesus will come for His bride. One day there will be a wedding...will you be a pure virgin?

And then Paul says, “I am afraid...”

Paul was fearful that these folks would fall into step with these false teachers, and he says, “Just as Satan deceived Eve by his craftiness, you're being deceived by the craftiness of the false teachers.”

How did Satan deceive Eve? By planting **doubt** in her mind – “hath God said?”

How were the false teachers deceiving the Corinthians? By planting **doubt** in their minds...**doubts** about a “by grace only salvation”...**doubts** that Paul had the authority he said he had...

So, to reinforce his authority and right to exhort and teach, Paul sets out to prove to them that there are vast differences between himself and the false teachers Satan is using to deceive them...and that brings us to our last point...

5) How to Prove a Spiritual Calling

Paul loved these folks. He had poured his heart and his life into them and the thing he feared most was that they would leave behind the things he had attempted to ground them in and would run after the legalistic teachings of the Judaizers.

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In **verses 4-12**, Paul contrasts the true and the false, showing the Corinthians **three ways** to know the difference...

Verses 4-5...

Difference number one: False teachers proclaim another Jesus and a different gospel.

There are a lot of folks who say they are preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, but they're not...they're preaching the devil's gospel. See how subtle, how cunning the devil is? The devil doesn't say, "don't believe in Jesus"...the devil doesn't say, "don't have anything to do with the Holy Spirit"...the devil doesn't say, "I'm against the gospel"...

NO! The devil just gives you another Jesus, another spirit, and another gospel! See how deceitful!! See what a very crafty liar Satan is!!

The bottom line of this is that Satan uses folks who represent themselves as preachers and teachers to put forth this false message! Satan is occupying many of the pulpits of America. They have a "doctor of divinity" behind their name...they call themselves "reverend"...but they are tools of Satan! That's what was happening in Corinth!

But "you bear this beautifully," Paul says this with a touch of sarcasm, meaning they were tolerant of this heresy.

The Phillips' translation: "you cheerfully accept this".

There are just some things that we're **not to tolerate and accept**, and one of them is any teaching that is contrary to the Word of God!

Today the tendency is not so much to run to a gospel of legalism as much as it is to run to a gospel based upon emotion. Both are extremely dangerous.

Our salvation is not based on **rules and regulations** and our salvation is not based on our **feelings!**

So, if you're not going to tolerate someone who preaches error, that means you must know truth!!

- 1 - **Know how you were given this great salvation!** (For by grace are you saved through faith, not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, lest any man should boast...)
- 2 - **Know how you got it and how you keep it!** (Praise God, we don't keep ourselves saved! He does the saving and He does the keeping!)
- 3 - **Know the Gospel!** (Quite simply...the gospel is the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ!)
- 4 - **Know all this so well that you can spot a different gospel a mile away!**

Verses 5-6...

Difference number two...False teachers have a lot of charisma.

Now, I don't mean that true teachers cannot be appealing. But, false teachers many times are **so charismatic, so appealing** that that's all folks see! I mean, they see someone who's dressed to "nines", with their hair all in place, so smooth and polished... but they don't take the time to analyze the content of their message!!

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The Corinthians were and many folks today are persuaded to embrace heretical teaching because it was wrapped in appealing charm. Let me tell you that God holds US accountable for the light we have, but He also holds those who preach contrary to this Book accountable...**Galatians 1:8-9**

Basically, Paul's argument here is this: "I'm just as authentic as the original twelve apostles. Place me next to Peter, Andrew, James or John, and I can measure up with the best of them. Others may be more eloquent, but what I lack in eloquence, I more than compensate for in knowledge, because God has taught me what I'm teaching you."

The Greeks were impressed by great oratorical skills...and here Paul is saying that he may not be skillful in oratory, but what he says is truth!!

Beloved, don't be seduced by **persuasive delivery...check the content!!**
(Folks, Hitler was a great speaker!!)

Difference number three...False teachers are greedy.

Some of these teachers were telling the Corinthians that Paul's words weren't worth hearing because he didn't charge an admission fee. Paul addresses that accusation in **verses 7-9...**

Paul had received offerings from other churches so that he could remain financially free in wealthy Corinth...he never wanted it said that he came to them for the money they could have amply provided.

Paul concludes the presentation of the proof of his calling in **verses 9-12...**
Paul loved these folks so much that he continues to call attention to these false teachers who would lead all the Corinthian believers astray.

Was Paul surprised by the popularity of these false teacher? No, for he knew their source! Verses 13-15a...

Satan – the archenemy of Christ Himself – was behind it all. How does he do it?

He disguises himself!! This word means exactly what it says...it has the idea of a masquerade.

Beloved, Satan doesn't come around in a red union suit, horns, a forked tail and a pitchfork. I hope we'd all have sense enough to run from something dressed up like that!!

And, neither do his false teachers. They appear right and good at first. Their message seems to have at least enough truth to make some of God's people listen to them and believe them. But their "end shall be according to their deeds" (**verse 15b**).

God's Word teaches **degrees of punishment in hell** and I believe the hottest part of hell is reserved for the false teachers who have led God's children astray. Jesus said that it would be better if a millstone were tied around a person's neck and he were dropped into the sea than to lead one of His little ones astray.

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Don't fall for any of these false teachers. They are Satan's tools. They abound today. And the sad thing is that their auditoriums are full.

Their false message is spreading, too! Helen Floyd told me this past week that the "Pensacola revival" and the "Toronto blessing" has spread as far as England.

So, what's our defense against this sort of thing?

KNOW GOD'S WORD!!

Bring all your thoughts captive to the obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ!!

"To whom much is given, much is required.." And, let me say this...it's a very serious thing to know God's Word...because when you know it, you must not only live by it...but you must measure everything you hear preached by it. God's Word is your **measuring rod**, your **plumb line**. Get to know the essentials of the faith.

If you hear a preacher who preaches a "name it and claim it"...a "health and wealth message" or a "works related message"...then use the light you have to shine on it and show it for what it is...a lie from the enemy of you soul!!

May God be pleased with us as we learn more about Him, His Son, and His Word.

May His dear Holy Spirit enlighten our understanding and may we be able to war according to the Spirit and not the flesh. May we be able to not only spot false teaching ourselves, but may we be able to share truth with weak, unlearned Christians who have fallen for Satan's schemes.