

"The Commendation of God" – 2 Corinthians 10

Shall we open our Bibles to 2 Corinthians, chapter 10. The book of 2 Corinthians has become my just probably where I'm at, and through my life and some of the difficult sicknesses and some of the things that have gone along with being sick, This book has really become quite an interesting book on just 'dealing with attitudes'. And so I want to just take our time and get through this book, because as I've mentioned before out of all the New Testament books and all the writings that Paul wrote, this is the only book that he really opens his heart and begins to lay out some of the difficult times that he went through; and they are so rich. It's so encouraging to see our hero, Paul, as a Christian beginning to confess that he is going through difficult times and how he deals with it. This morning we took a look at 'criticism' and how he was able to overcome that tremendous criticism against his life by once again understanding that it was part of the warfare that he was going through. And so he didn't have to react he was able to keep his cool, and because of that God was able to continue to use him in a very powerful way.

And so tonight we want to take a look at chapter 10. And Jon Courson made an interesting comment, he said that on June 6, 1944, General Eisenhower made a decision, sending 150,000 American troops and allied troops into Normandy Beach along with 5,000 different carriers to get the men inside. And they stormed the beach of Omaha, there going after the Nazis, and on that day, 9,000 guys gave up their life. And on that morning, or by the end of the evening, it was pretty much of a decisive battle. We believe that we took the stronghold, but in the years to follow, though the battle had been won, there were many, many, many different battles that took place. And there were more

that died from that point on, than on that one day. And he made an interesting point: That Jesus Christ 2,000 years ago gave to us 'the victory'. It was a decisive victory, but in our lives, it seems like we spend the rest of our life mopping up. And there are a lot of attacks coming towards our lives, and we need to remember that we are 'fighting from victory - not for victory'. And so the attack of the enemy or even Hitler not giving up, waiting again for so long until he finally was crushed; we find so much like our lives.

Let me give you a biblical illustration and take the government out. God anointed David to be the king. He had rejected Saul, you remember, because he had sinned against God. And there Samuel anointed David, and it was another 20-25 years before David really came to the throne because Saul would not give up his throne. Though Saul was defeated, though God made a decisive factor to take the kingdom away from Saul, even though he took it away from Saul, Saul wouldn't give it up. Well Satan doesn't want to give up that which he rightfully has to give up. So, David had to continue serving the Lord, running for his life, and one day eventually when Saul died, David took the throne. Well we are in the very same place; we believe that Christ came, gave us the victory, and we need to be faithful until that day Christ comes back. But the victory has been won - Jesus Christ has destroyed Satan. And once again publicly there upon the cross, went the way of the cross; and so we are 'set free by the power of Jesus Christ'. And so Satan has to give up, he has to let you go, he cannot continue to oppress you or to challenge you in the way that begins to destroy your life. But if you're ignorant of his devices, and you're not really strong in 'the Word', then you're going to be deceived; and everything that happens in and through your life is going to seem that God is either against you or you are making horrible decisions in your life. Well first of all, God is for you, and if God be for you who can be against you? And Jesus died for you, and the Holy Spirit has baptized you, so the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit have made a commitment.

And so the background of chapter 10 is really just the mopping up of the work that God has already done. In chapters 10, 11, 12 and 13, Paul now is going to have to defend his apostleship. He is going to have to stand up and tell these men exactly what God has done for him. Now, he is not defending himself. He is defending the call of God upon his life, and there's a big difference. Sometimes we go around seeking to defend ourselves. I think it's God's responsibility to defend you, and it's your responsibility to defend the work that God is doing in and through your life. And Paul said, **"To them that there would be wolves that would come in."** (John 10:12) He had labored in Corinth, you remember eighteen months, a year and a half, and he warned them that when he was going to go - that these Judaizers would come in, these false prophets, seeking to bring in legalism and seeking to bring them back under the law. And finally because of that, they walked away from, in a sense, the 'Grace of God'. The leadership in Corinth that loved Paul has now turned against Paul, and they are beginning to question his authority and question the sincerity of his heart. And so I think it's a great chapter to really try to get inside of our lives, because you are going to be criticized, you are going to be talked about and there are going to be people that are going to drive you crazy.

My wife on the way home had to stop and get some groceries, and when she came out this gal was irate, yelling and screaming at my wife. And you know my wife; she's very quiet and very gentle. And this woman...I wanted to tell my wife, "You should have done some judo on her, or some black belt, or some kung fu." And I could just see my wife just laying her out, but that's me. But Gail just sat there and looked horrified. And the whole thing is that she was accused of denting the car. And Gail started saying, "Well I'm sorry". Well, did you dent the car? She said, "No I didn't". I said, "Well, why are you sorry?" She said, "Well I thought a soft answer would turn away wrath, but she got madder." And I thought...Oh. And we walked and we started laughing. I thought...isn't that interesting, on a Sunday afternoon, serving the Lord, loving

God, you cannot get away from problems in your life. Well, that woman had a difficult day. Her car was her God. That dent was something that was far beyond what she was going through. And that's going to happen in your life. So, if you understand that behind that, the enemy is seeking to destroy your life. You can just say, "Lord my hand is in Your hand."

And so Paul was vindicating his ministry. He was given the ministry on the Damascus road where God said, **"I'm going to show you all the things that you're going to suffer."** (Acts 9:16) So, God gave him this ministry, very important. I know that God put Gail and me together. Why is that so important? After thirty-three years, there have been moments we thought maybe not. And she wanted to go here, and I wanted to go there, but we couldn't because God put us together. So, 'the calling' of God is the strongest thing in your life. If you know that God has called you to walk with Him. If you know that God has called you to the marriage or even at this moment to be single or to be a widow, then you can rest assured that in that calling God is going to give you the strength. And not only did God call him, you remember, but once again God gave him the gospel. There in the Arabian Desert, for three years Paul said, **"Flesh and blood has not revealed this, but the Spirit of God gave to me the ministry of grace."** (Matthew 16:17) showed me the ministry.

And so here you have a man who has been commissioned by God, has been given to him the oracles of God, and all he needs to do now is stand. And you would think that everybody would be blessed by Paul, but everyone seemed to hate him. They didn't know what to do with him, and oftentimes his boldness became a real curse. But he was confident, he was convinced, and I believe that God desires you to be convinced and confident in the calling that God has given to you; that He has called you, and He has given to you a ministry, and you need to stay faithful to that work. And so we find, very simply, three simple things I

want to draw your attention to this evening. In verses 1 through 11, just simply 'The hurt of criticism', in verse 12, 'The danger of comparing', and then in verses 13-18, 'The blessing accommodation'. So, the pain of criticism, then the danger of comparing yourself one with another, and then the blessing of God placing His hand upon your life and saying to you, **"Well done thou good and faithful servant."** (Matthew 25:21) As John was blessed (John the Baptist) **"This is him who's in the wilderness."** (Mark 1:4) Have you gone and listened to him? Or Job, **"This is my servant. Satan, have you noticed how faithful he is?"** (Job 1:8) So God desires to use you, and God desires to boast about your commitment to Him. So God desires you to become 'a lover of The Most High'.

And so we pick up the story here in chapter 10. Once again Paul was standing up for his authority, and they are now coming against him. And Jesus said, **"One of the things he hated was the doctrine of the Nicolaitans."** (Revelation 2:15) which is a rulership over the people. Jesus said, **"It ought not to be this way. He says the Gentiles exercise lordship over your life. But this ought not to be for you are to be, (for you are to be what?) a servant of God, and the greatest in the kingdom will be a servant of all."** (Mark 10:42-45) So, Paul is now saying, listen guys, I've been a servant to you, and these other false prophets are taking from you. And that's important to know in ministry. If you're dating a guy, that he's taking, hey dump him, because he's going to 'take you out to lunch'. You need to marry somebody who is a giver. You need to be able to understand the blessing it is to give. And so in verses 1-11: The pain or the hurt of criticism.

Now I Paul myself beseech you (and so the tenderness of him beseeching, I beg you) **by the meekness and the gentleness of Christ, who in the presence am based among you, but by absence am bold toward you.** (2 Corinthians 10:1) So, he's now coming and saying, listen, in the meekness and

the gentleness of our Lord. I believe that one of the great marks of Christianity is a 'gentle spirit'. You must understand that though He was powerful, Christ, He allowed them to tie his hands. So, power was mingled with meekness. If all you have is power within your life, and you're not a meek person, then that power is going to corrupt you. And you're going to abuse the power that God has given you because you are to build up; you're not to tear down. And without that meekness, (and a good definition for meekness: Is me? Yuck!) **"Blessed are the meek."** (Matthew 5:5) And then you remember Jesus said that He had truth, but He also had that love, it was mingled with love, grace and truth. So, you can have a lot of love and no truth and make a mess of things. And you can have a lot of truth and no love and hurt a lot of people. So, God is looking for the balance within ministry, within marriage, within single living, He desires a balance within our life. And so by the meekness and the gentleness.

In 2 Timothy he declares in chapter 2 verse 24, **"And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach."** (2 Timothy 2:24) So, God does not want you striving, pulling strings, and trying to make things happen. He desires that you would be gentle, that you would allow the Holy Spirit to open doors. That you would not need to 'dynamite a door' and try to blow the door open and then walk through and say, "Praise God, He opened the door." No, you opened the door, and it's the wrong door. You need to allow God to open doors (and check this out, believe it or not) you need to beg God to close doors. Because the worst thing in your life is to go through a door that He didn't want you to go through. And all of a sudden you find like the sons of Sceva, **"The demons said, we know Paul, and we know Jesus, who you are?"** (Acts 19:15) And all of a sudden you find these guys running down the street naked because they had no authority within their life, they were messing where they should not have been messing. And so 'bold towards you', what they were saying about Paul, that in his presence, hey he's a sweet guy, but when he gets away, he writes a mean, mean letter. **"But, I beseech you** (I beg you)

that I may not be bold when I am present with you that the confidence, wherewith I think to be bold against some, which think of us as if we walked according to the flesh.” (2 Corinthians 10:2) Now all he's saying in the very gentle King James way is, “I sure hope you repent before I get there because you're going to find a guy that's not afraid to deal with you face to face.” This is the man that you remember when Peter was playing games, jumping from table to table. He said that Paul confronted him to his face, publicly. And it was just a shot in the heart for Peter, “Peter why are you being such a hypocrite?” Paul said what was on his heart. It was the very same man Paul that said to John Mark, “You're not coming with me on my second trip. Even though your uncle is Barnabas and he gave all the money to the church, I really don't care you're not coming; you left me, and you need to grow up.” And it was fourteen years before Paul brought him back when he was in prison. This is the man that you remember when Bar-Jesus was beginning to mess with Paul. Paul was ministering to the governor; the governor was extremely open to the work of God. And this one man who was a sorcerer began to challenge Paul and began to hinder the work of God. And Paul just turned around and said, “Be blind.” And the man was blind. This is the man that they are beginning to challenge with.

It would be like one day...remember we were in a building project. It's kind of real embarrassing...but I'll tell you. Don't tell anybody...you will. But I remember that we didn't have the pews and it was concrete, and I think we were like seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars in debt, and we owed probably another two hundred thousand, and we had another million or two to go. And I remember sitting back in my office on the concrete floor just crying. I don't cry a lot, but I remember crying; because I robbed Peter to pay Paul, and Peter and Paul were broke. And I didn't know what to do. And so all of a sudden I got a phone call, and on the other end of the line, it was, "Steve". "Yes?" "This is Pastor Chuck". "Yes?" "Are you going to be there in an hour?"

"Yes." "I'm coming down to talk to you." "Okay." So we hung up the phone. My heart just began to die... Why would Pastor Chuck leave his church to come down to 'old, wee, little tiny South Bay' and want to talk to me? And so he came down, and he said, "I hear you're out of money." "Well...kind of...yes...yes, but let me tell you why." And so I begin to explain. About halfway into the conversation, Chuck said, "Do you want my money or not?" I said, "Yes!" He said, "Then fine". But I remember so vividly when he walked into my office, I thought...man, this is like God saying, "Son, are you broke?" "Yes, Dad I am." He said, "I didn't come to hear why, I just came to help".

Well Paul was that type of an authority that you love him, respected him, but boy you did not want him coming down on you. And so he says, "You guys you'd better get it together before I come." And once again to be bold, Paul was bold in 'the Spirit'. He was able to minister, you remember, to the sorcerers. He was able to once again bring healing to public life there on the island of Malta. Peter had the very same power. It was Peter that said to Ananias and Sapphira, why do you lie to the Holy Spirit? Both of them died. So, we are talking about a ministry and this is it: A gifting that God gives to a man or to a woman, it's not their gift, but it's the gift that God's given to them. And so we find that, very simply, that God is saying in verse 4 **"For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds."** (2 Corinthians 10:4). And so the 'weapons' we looked at this morning: the sword of the spirit, and once again just the spirit of prayer, and the presence of Christ. And I would encourage you to get the tape.

"Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; and have a readiness to revenge all disobedience." (2 Corinthians 10:5-6) And that's an interesting verse, underline the words, 'a readiness to revenge all disobedience', when your

obedience is fulfilled. What he's saying is that in leadership, you cannot just have the good without the bad. There's nothing greater than teaching or worshipping or doing a ministry or being a missionary, those are wonderful things, and those are 'gifting's' that God gives. But the other side of the responsibility of 'The Gift' is to guard; to guard the work of God; to protect the glory of God. So that means that not only do I need to give, I need to guard. And so I need to have a readiness to deal with disobedience, and Paul is saying that you were disobedient, you became obedient concerning that man who was living with his mother-in-law. When I wrote to you, then you became obedient, you threw him out of your church, and I commend you for that. And so he's saying, very simply, in verse 6, **"And having a readiness to revenge all disobedience."** (2 Corinthians 10:6). So if you desire to be in leadership at work or in your home with your children or here at the ministry, you have to be willing to deal with difficult issues. And oftentimes we don't want to do that, we want them to go away; they don't go away, they begin to grow. And maybe you don't like the word 'confrontation'. Well, how about 'peacemakers'? God has called us to be 'peacemakers' - to use the Gift of Wisdom, to try to find an answer, to bring closure to a situation. But if someone is not glorifying God, if someone is taking advantage of the work of God, and if I don't have the heart to stop it, I shouldn't even be in it. So, I can start an 'Afterglow', but I need to have the authority and the strength (and check this out) and the boldness to stop it; to be willing to stop everything to protect the glory of God, not allowing the flesh to dominate anything. And that's difficult to find in a leader because they want to be friends, they want to hang out, they want to do things, but that's not what God's looking for. God is looking to give His gift, God is looking to give His power, and God desires you now would become an instrument to do exactly what God wants you to do, friends or no friends. So the greatest curse of ministry is getting so close to people that you cannot be faithful to God, and God wants you faithful to Him. And so a great friend will once again warn you in a very interesting and powerful way. Not to tolerate those that bring dishonor,

and not to dishonor the name of God, but once again to bring order back into the church.

“Do ye look on things after the outward appearance? (Well, this is kind of interesting.) **If any man trust to himself that he is Christ's, let him of himself think this again, that, as he is Christ's, even so are we.”** (2 Corinthians 10:7). That's all he's saying, very simply: Is listen, if you say that you are Christians, I'm saying that I'm a Christian. But, the carnality of your life is you're looking on the outward. And Paul, according to what we know, was a very, very ugly guy. Very short guy, had a hooknose and kind of beaten face, had pussy eyes, drooling all the time, was not a well-spoken speaker, not a good speaker. He said I didn't come to you in a demonstration of the flesh but in the demonstration of 'the Spirit'. He is talking about concerning his own ministry: his speech was ruddy, in other words just rough and tough, probably hard to listen to, but the substance was unbelievable. So Paul was dealing with them, you guys are looking at the outward appearance I have what it takes inside. And sometimes you think, “You know Lord, I need to get it all together on the outside.” But it's what you have on the inside - if you have Christ inside, that's all it takes. You remember in (1 Samuel 16:7) that God said to Samuel, **“Don't look (on what?) the outward appearance,** (but we do). God says **look at the heart.”** And God is one who looks at the heart. Jesus said in (Luke 16:15), **“And He said unto them, ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: that which is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God.”** So, what you're saying is a great thing, God is calling an abomination. So, God is looking at the 'intent of the heart'. **“The word of God is quicker, powerful, sharper than any two edged sword, able to divide between the joint and the marrow and to be a discerner of the intent of the heart.”** (Hebrews 4:12) God looks on the inside; and so don't judge me on the outward. **“...I'm Christ, even as you. For though I should boast somewhat more of our**

authority, which the Lord hath given us for edification, and not for your destruction, I should not be ashamed..." (2 Corinthians 10:7-8) If you're a teacher or a leader in the church, I want you to pay very close attention to verse 8, even if you're in ministry or missionary. The gift and the power for the gift was given to build up the body of Christ, not to build a kingdom, not to bring something about you - but your gifting is to bless people. If I really desire to use the gift and the power that God has given to me, the authority. In other words, very simply, if I walked away from the pulpit, God would just remove the authority, and I would just be a typical guy. But being here, God has placed that authority on my life to make decisions. I'm not to do what they did in the days of Nehemiah, the judges before Nehemiah, they abused the people. Nehemiah said, "I have not abused my authority one bit." So when you find a shepherd, when you find a person that loves God with all their heart, power will not be abusive in other people's lives. "I'm the leader, I'm in charge, and we do it my way." - That's so terrible, that's not why God gave you the gift. He gave you the gift, believe it or not: To nurture and to edify, to build up, not to use the gift to destroy. So, you have to find ways of ministering the 'grace of God'. You might be upset; you might see things undone that are ungodly before everyone else. You might cop an attitude, and you feel like just beating this rock and telling people exactly what's wrong with them, but you'd better not because they're not your people. And they've been bought by the blood of Christ, and they belong to Jesus Christ. And the Great Shepherd needs to discipline His people. I simply need to be a warning block. And if God wants to use me as an instrument to bring regeneration or the gift of reconciliation, then great, but I'm not to use the authority to get things or to abuse things or to hurt things.

Now let me bring it home to your heart. Those of you that are parents, God gave you the authority over their lives. But you are to use this quote, being a parent for one reason and one reason only. You are to use it with all the authority that God has invested to you to build up your kids, not to tear them

down, not to talk down to them, but to build them up in the faith. And so we find that these false teachers were once again coming and they were doing destruction instead of edification, and I should boast in the calling of God. So, God gave me the gift, God gave me the calling, God gave me the authority, and the power is not to destroy, but the power is given to release and set free. Jesus said to Lazarus, **"Come forth."** And you remember he came forth, as a mummy. And all of a sudden Jesus said to what? He said to the people, you guys what? **"You guys loose him."** (John 11) You take the gift and the authority and the power and un-wrap him. What a great ministry, to be known as a 'lover of people', not a mean person. But, if you cross us, we can rise up to the occasion, that's what Paul is saying, "Hey, I'm a sweetheart, challenge me, I'll stand with my authorities, stand with my God, stand with the teaching that the Holy Spirit has given to me, you're going to have to reckon the truth." I wouldn't want that, neither would you?

And so, we find in verse 9, **"That I may not seem as if I would terrify you by letters.** (I would never want to do that.) **For his letters, say they, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech weak. Let such a one think this, that such as we are in word by letters when we are absent, such will we be also in deed when we are present."** (2 Corinthians 10:9-11) In other words, no double standard; they will find out the truth and we will stand behind the very letter. So, that's how Paul dealt with criticism. He would not let it destroy his life. He would not let it keep him up all through the night. He would not let it destroy the growth within his life. And we do, if our boss doesn't like us, we want to quit. If someone offends us in the church, we're out of here. If someone doesn't say hi, the church is weird. In other words, everybody's wrong. In fact, have you ever said to yourself? "I had a bunch of dumb teachers, and that's why I flunked school." Well, come on. They all graduated and you flunked, so I don't think that's really true. And when you throw dirt, you're going to lose ground. Roumaine used to

tell us "If you point a finger, you have three pointing back at you." Sooner or later, you're going to have to come to grips with, "I am what I am by the grace of God." I'm going to be criticized but Jesus said, "Don't worry about it." You're going to be persecuted. Opposition is going to come. The moment you make a decision to really serve God, your life is going to go on the burner; Satan is going to seek to destroy you. When Nehemiah was building a wall, what did Tobiah and Sandballat say? **"If a fox blows on this wall, it's going to come down."** (Nehemiah 4:3) And the moment you say God, I want to do something for you opposition is going to come. Jesus said, "Expect this." "Well, if I could just expect it, I wouldn't be blown out of the water." To go into the mission field and think that, this is a piece of cake, you're crazy. You're going to sacrifice, you're going to give up your home, you're going to give up some comfort, and you're going to have to do what God wants you to do. And so he declares here 'the danger of not understanding criticism'.

In verse 12, probably one of the great verses of chapter 10: 'The danger of comparison'. **"For we dare not...** (This is one of the first scriptures I ever learned as a Christian.) **For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves; but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are unwise.** (2 Corinthians 10:12) So what he's saying is that if you are comparing yourself with me, you're unwise. If you're numbering yourself among the Judaizers, you are unwise. If you are going to measure the growth of your church by the people you have, you are unwise. Now let me give you an example. To the seven churches of Asia Minor in Revelation 2 and 3, they had an idea of how they were: **"We are rich and have need of nothing."** But Jesus had his own opinion: **"He said, you're naked, you're cold, you're broke and you're miserable."** (Revelation 3:17)

So there is your perspective - and there is God's perspective. If I look around and look at Billy Graham, then I'm going to be pretty bummed out that I'm not really serving God with the intensity that he had. What if I go down to skid row and see somebody there, I'm going to think, "Hey, got a car, got clothes, doing pretty good, I'm much better than he is." The moment you compare yourself with one with another, you're in trouble. I look at you and see hair, man I'm bummed. I see you take your hair and dye it orange; it grieves my heart, not because it's orange, but because you have hair to dye. I mean I thought about maybe doing some curls or something, but then someone said "I would look like Bozo on my staff." And I can't believe that, it broke my heart. And then I have a little bit lift here...I could just kind of grow this out and it would be kind of cool. And then I think of...you know...looking around, and I think wow. I've listened to Chuck, and I think, "Oh I'm never going to be as good as he is." And then I listen to somebody else and think, "God you've done a pretty good work." But here's the key: The standard can never be people. The standard that you have to adopt is Jesus Christ; that if you can put your name in 1 Corinthians and read it all the way through chapter 13, then you are pretty good. Steve suffers long in his kind. Steve bears all things, believes all things, and endures all things. I can't, I've got to stop there. Put Jesus in there, Jesus bears all things, Jesus believes all things. In other words, what standard (now be careful) do you judge your life by? If you get hurt, and you skip out of this church and go to another church, you're going to look at the standard of this church as a justification for you to do something contrary to God. Or you're going to say, "Well, Pastor Steve made me stumble, so this bud's on him." Well, what standard? In other words, if you put your standard according to me, yes, I'm going to bum you out, but if your standard is forever Jesus Christ, then we will never compare ourselves, we will never measure ourselves and we will never number ourselves, because they are unwise. You can have a large congregation and be right in the city and right with the staff but be totally wrong with God. Numbers do not mean that you're successful at all. Or you can have no numbers whatsoever, like

Noah, how he built the ark and preached for a hundred and twenty years, and no one came to Christ. Was he successful or was he a failure? Or Jeremiah who was called to take out a nation, and he there watched as no one repented and his ministry was destroyed. Or John who had to decrease that Christ would increase and the very presence of Christ disintegrated his ministry. So if he looked around at the other boys; or even Peter said to Jesus, "What about John?" And what did Jesus say to Peter? "Peter (my translation) mined your own business. I'll do what I want to do with John, and I'll do what I want to do with you. You're the problem, Peter, and we're going to talk about you." Well, what about Rob or what about Don or what about somebody else? Listen, you're the one that has to have the standard, so the danger of beginning to compare yourself or number yourself. **"Jesus said unless you're righteousness exceeds that of the righteous Pharisees, you're not going to enter the kingdom of God."** (Matthew 5:20) And they thought that the righteous Pharisees were the most holy people on the earth. Jesus destroyed their concept. And so the disciples knew that they were in serious trouble, because they could not live up to the standards of the law that the Pharisees did. So Jesus said, once again when he was ascended, that this is the way that the Father has accepted Christ. And the only way to heaven is through Christ. So, the standard is not "Well she likes me or I like him, or this church will let me do this or that church will let me do this, or this will happen or that will happen." What does Jesus Christ want you to do in your life? And so once again: 'The danger of refusing to evaluate your relationship with Christ'.

And then in verse 13 all the way through the end of the chapter: 'The blessing of the accommodation'. And this is kind of cool, he says **"But we** (and once again it's conjunction "we") **will not boast of the things without our measure...**, (2 Corinthians 10:13) **So** Paul is saying, "I'm not going to boast about anything except in the ministry that God has given to me." And it means "to glory". Or it means, in fact in chapters 10, 11 and 12, twenty times the word "boast" is used,

but not in a bad way. In Paul's life, he is simply stating the fact, he's not boasting in himself, but in the things that God has done. **"...But according to the measure of the rule that God has distributed to us, a measure to reach even unto you."** (2 Corinthians 10:13) Now what he's saying is that, listen, "God has made me an apostle, and God has given me the authority, and like it or not, God has put you under my authority. Here in verse 13, **"...a measure to reach even to you."** So, I was the one that God gave this authority to, without measure. We will not boast of the things that are not true.

And so the danger of boasting, exaggerating, the white little lies or the fibs: "Hey there were thousands and thousands of people." When there were twenty-five people. In other words, don't boast, in the things that are not true. And don't boast in yourself, but if you're going to boast, you want to boast in the goodness and the grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ. **"...according to the measure..."** (2 Corinthians 10:13) In other words evangelistically speaking, or stretching it. **"For we stretch not ourselves beyond our measure,** (In other words we don't make up things, we don't want to look better, we're not exaggerating: "No I'm just a guy by the grace of God.") **as though we reached not unto you: for we are come as far as to you also in preaching the gospel of Christ."** (2 Corinthians 10:14) So, what he's saying is "That God brought me to Corinth. He's brought me this far. I don't know where God's going to take me, and I'm not going to boast in what God has done, but I will tell you that I have preached in Asia, I am preaching in Europe, and I am as far as I've ever been speaking to you in Corinth, and God has a desire for me to go to Rome, but we'll see what happens later on. So, God knows, I don't know. **"Not boasting of the things without our measure, that is, other men's labors;** (in other words not boasting in other men's labor) **but having hope, when your faith is increased, that we shall be enlarged by you according to our rule abundantly,** (And so we want to maintain the ministry.) **To preach the gospel in the regions beyond you,** (that's our desire) **not to boast in**

another man's line of things made ready to our hands.” (2 Corinthians 10:15-16) Now, let me address a very, very touchy issue. Very few people understand true, true evangelistic work. Most people will start their ministry next to a church that is growing to siphon off the people. They will take another man's foundation and they will seek, once again, to entertain them with what they have. True evangelism is going where nobody else is. If you would take the pastors today and tell them, “You cannot go next to a church and begin to siphon it off.” Then you're going to find out that many of them would never stop because they would say, “Well how are we going to build our church? By what faith? I need people to do that.” They go down to Costa Mesa, they do it here but mostly at Costa Mesa, they put little flyers on the windows, come to our new church. Well, why don't they go down to the beach? Why don't they go down to the mall? Why are they targeting the church parking lot? You see, that's wrong. And Paul was saying, “I've never done that. I've never taken advantage of the people that God has given to you.” And the danger is people beginning to say “Well I want to do my own thing.” And so they leave and they take the church with them. When I left Hosanna, I told the congregation, “Not one of you follows me; otherwise it would be out of God's will.” And none did, because this is where God wanted me. He didn't want to do something here by destroying the work over there. If I don't have enough faith to believe that God is calling me and God is going to bring people, I shouldn't even get involved; but all of a sudden we begin to do these things that are not right. **“But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.”** (2 Corinthians 10:17)

Now in (Jeremiah 9:23-24), jot these down because these are great verses for you to remember, even read it tonight before you go to bed. **“Thus saith the Lord, let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise (longsuffering or) loving-kindness,**

judgment, righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord.” (Jeremiah 9:23-24) So if we are going to glory, it will never be in our riches or where we live or what we drive or how we dress. We as Christians should boast and rejoice in this: the loving-kindness, understanding the judgments of God, the righteousness of the earth, these are things God delights in.

And then in verse 18, **“For it is not the one that commends himself who is approved, but whom the Lord commends.”** (2 Corinthians 10:18) And it means, very simply, “Hey guys I’m called, I’m being used, I’m pretty together.” Well, that’s fine; we don’t know if we’re going to believe that. But it’s a wonderful thing when God just places His hand upon your life and says, “This is My beloved Son, listen to him.” And when God places His hand upon your life, He has commissioned you, and there is the ‘Fruit of the Spirit’ within your life. And if you have to boast or share the greatness of your ministry: the book of Proverbs says, **“Look boast not in the things of yourself, but let another man boast about you.”** (Proverbs 27:2) You should never tell people how big the church is or what is going on, you know, let the Lord do that. But, in this: “That I’ve approved your life.” So I’ll end up by saying, “Hey, if I can go to bed at night, I can say well, I’ve taught four times today, I taught last Saturday, I taught Wednesday night, taught Thursday night, taught Friday night, taught four times today. Man, Lord, you’ve got to bless me.” And God could say, “Steven, I’m very, very displeased because in all of your teaching, you haven’t spent any time with me, and as far as I’m concerned, if you’ve neglected that, we don’t have a relationship that we can build on.”

So tonight, it’s not in what you have or what you do; it’s Who you know and Who you love. It’s God saying, “This is my Servant.” And yet, people don’t get it. They come to me, “Hey what’s the secret to success?” Teach the bible. “No, no, no, no, how do you do that?” Stand up and teach the bible. “No, come

on, there has to be something more." Okay, you have to be bald and fat and then, you just teach the bible. "No, no, no, it has to be something, no." Okay, okay, you've got to have a pretty wife, and you've got to wear Hawaiian shirts and you've got to teach the bible. "Oh, okay, that works, I can do that." And so you go out, you buy Hawaiian shirt, buy some flip flops, marry a pretty girl, eat a bunch of 'In-and-Outs', shave your head and stand up, "Hi". And all of a sudden He's not there. You see it has nothing to do with all this. It's a gift that God has given to you with the power of music or the power of preaching or the power of administration, but it is to be done so carefully for the glory of God - that people don't get hurt.

Closing Prayer:

Father we thank You, for Your kindness, and Lord for Your goodness within our lives. Lord, I love these people so much, and I've watched them grow as they have watched me grow. And God, I want to deal with criticism so much better. I want to be able to receive those letters and be able to respond in the Spirit of Christ. I need to go beyond the letter, go beyond the person, and oftentimes see that the enemy is seeking to bring a hindrance within our own life. Father, forgive us for comparing, measuring, or even numbering, for God, it's not in the numbers, or Father in the success; but Lord it's in the standard that we choose. And when we make You our standard, oh Lord, we need to repent. But You were a servant, You came not to be ministered to, but You came to give. And when I look at You as the authority of my life, it changes the way I work at work. I can't make excuses like, "Well that's the language they use around here." That's not true. I can work anywhere; do anything, as long as I know You have called me; and that You have not called me to please men, You have called me to please You. And so may my life, my attitude be gentle, be kind, may I never be an offence to the ministry. But may we always be reminded of our Lord, that though He was rich, He became poor, that taking us who are poor and making us rich. Oh God, give to us that ministry of reconciliation where we

use the gifts, and the talents to edify; may we never use the gift to destroy or devastate. And we will thank you. In Jesus name. Amen.