

Paul Describes Himself

Now I, Paul, myself urge you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ—I who am meek when face to face with you, but bold toward you when absent! 2 I ask that when I am present, I need not be bold with the confidence with which I propose to be courageous against some, who regard us as if we walked according to the flesh.

3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, 4 for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.

5 We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, 6 and we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete.

7 You are looking at things as they are outwardly. If anyone is confident in himself that he is Christ's, let him consider this again within himself, that just as he is Christ's, so also are we. 8 For even if I boast somewhat further about our authority, which the Lord gave for building you up and not for destroying you, I will not be put to shame,

9 for I do not wish to seem as if I would terrify you by my letters. 10 For they say, "His letters are weighty and strong, but his personal presence is unimpressive and his speech contemptible." 11 Let such a person consider this, that what we are in word by letters when absent, such persons we are also in deed when present.

12 For we are not bold to class or compare ourselves with some of those who commend themselves; but when they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are without understanding.

13 But we will not boast beyond our measure, but within the measure of the sphere which God apportioned to us as a measure, to reach even as far as you. 14 For we are not overextending ourselves, as if we did not reach to you, for we were the first to come even as far as you in the gospel of Christ;

15 not boasting beyond our measure, that is, in other men's labours, but with the hope that as your faith grows, we will be, within our sphere, enlarged even more by you, 16 so as to preach the gospel even to the regions beyond you, and not to boast in what has been accomplished in the sphere of another.

17 But HE WHO BOASTS IS TO BOAST IN THE LORD. 18 For it is not he who commends himself that is approved, but he whom the Lord commends.

We will use five tools on our expedition that are built around five questions

- What questions were provoked within you?
- Did anything confuse you?
- Did anything move you emotionally?
- Did God instruct you to do something?
- Did you gain any insight into God's character

Paul's observations and insights

1. From your encounters with Paul would you say he is meek?
2. What about the Lord Jesus Christ - is He meek and gentle?
3. Is Paul afraid to tell them what he thinks they need to hear?
4. When he arrives, it would seem Paul is expecting trouble with some of them.
5. He knows he will need to be bold and courageous.
6. So, they were suggesting Paul's team, including Paul, were acting out of the flesh - was he?
7. One of the ways the devil works is through accusation when challenged.
8. 'To walk in the flesh', is to be part of the world but not of the world - is there a difference?
9. Fighting evil God's way is through righteousness and peace.
10. Our weapons are built within the righteousness of Jesus, who is God's champion!
11. To be 'divinely powerful', is to stand as a representative of God.
12. False truth and pseudo saviours come and go - but there is no one who is like Jesus!
13. Taking 'every thought captive', is to understand who you are in Christ in your new nature.
14. 'Obedience complete', is to arrive as victor over your enemy.
15. It's what is happening inside that will reveal a true disciple of Jesus.
16. Blind people can't see, even if their eyes work!
17. To 'consider within yourself', is to let your spirit take back control.
18. When you have been called, you have been called.
19. Saying it is one thing, writing it is another.
20. If a person commends themselves, is that a good thing?
21. Self-boasting will inevitably lead to destruction.
22. To be 'without understanding', is to not know because you haven't heard.
23. Is Paul talking about a geographical or spiritual realm when he says, 'we went further than anyone else'?
24. What does it mean for 'God to appoint'?
25. To 'overextend' is to impose yourself on someone's else territory.
26. Paul makes a claim on this church based upon him, being the first to present the gospel.
27. 'Another's labour', is to take the credit for someone else's work.
28. There is lots to be getting on with! Don't get distracted, get on and do the right thing.
29. Preaching the gospel is getting on with proclaiming God's way of salvation.
30. My old minister used to say, 'I don't sheep steal, but I do grow good grass!
31. Boasting up God and the Lord Jesus is just fine - They are worthy of all praise.
32. When God lifts a person up it is an honourable thing.
33. When we lift ourselves up it is embarrassing!

