

2 Corinthians 10:7-18
(Jeremiah 9:23-24; Matthew 20:25-28)
“Taking Every Thought Captive to Obey Christ” II

Introduction

We are studying the final part of this letter, marked by a different tone than the first two sections, because there Paul was addressing those in Corinth who had repented of turning away from the gospel of Christ and believing a first century version of the prosperity gospel. But in this final section, Paul addresses those who have not yet repented and makes his final appeal to them to stop being shaped and molded by the world and to turn instead to the pursuit of Christ.

We looked last week at the opening verses of this section, noting the radical difference in the world’s and the church’s views of power, the difference in the weapons the world uses to pursue its ends and those entrusted to the church, and the difference in the goals pursued by those shaped by the surrounding culture and those shaped by the gospel of Christ.

We especially noted these words: “For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ” (10:4-5).

The obvious question, then, is how can we know that our thinking, our worldview, and therefore our way of doing things, and even the ends we pursue, are increasingly captive to Christ? The verses before us this morning give a series of contrasts that raise the very kinds of questions that we should be asking ourselves as we seek to follow Jesus and know the meaning of being united to him both in his death and in his resurrection victory.

Self-examination is not popular with contemporary American evangelicals, too many of whom misunderstand the message of grace, thinking that – because we are saved completely by God’s grace and not by our own righteousness – it must be wrong and legalistic to spend time in self-examination. But grace does something *in* us as well as *for* us. Therefore, Paul ended this letter with these words: “Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? – unless indeed you fail to meet the test!” (13:5).

In our text, we find Paul pleading with the Corinthians to face the facts and to stop being deceived by the teachers who have impressed them with their eloquence and stories of spiritual prowess. These twelve verses raise six diagnostic questions that can help us examine ourselves and grow in our faithful obedience to the Lord.

Body

- 1. Is my confidence in myself or in Christ (10:7)?**
- 2. Do I use my influence to build up or to tear down (10:8)?**
- 3. Do my actions match my words or contradict them (10:9-11)?**
- 4. Do I compare myself to other people or to Christ (10:12)?**
- 5. Am I pursuing my own goals or God's mission (10:13-16)?**
- 6. Am I seeking my own glory or the Lord's (10:17-18)?**

Conclusion

We who have been saved by grace have been called by Jesus to follow him, and have been empowered by his Spirit to do so. We will never completely and perfectly take every thought captive to obey Christ until we are with him. But that is to be the desire and the new trajectory of our life in Christ. Let's learn to ask ourselves these questions, not as an exercise in masochism but as an incentive to life in the Spirit, life in Christ, life as it is meant to be lived, life increasingly filled with the joy of the Lord.

As we seek daily the joy of the Lord and the power of the Spirit, we will know increasingly what it means to say with the Apostle Paul, "For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ" (10:4-5).

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