

## NOTES AND QUESTIONS FOR INDUCTIVE STUDY OF PAUL'S SECOND LETTER TO THE CORINTHIANS - PART ELEVEN

If the overflowing grace of God is so wonderful, surely everyone will see and want all that Jesus Christ offers and there will be no problems? Far from it. There will be those who not only reject grace but make life as hard as possible for those who receive and proclaim the grace of God. How are we to deal with them? Are we just to continue to be kind and gracious? Paul tackled this question in chapter 10.

There were obviously those who pointed out what seemed to be hypocrisy. Paul had shown 'meekness and gentleness' when he visited the Corinthians but was 'bold' when he wrote the tough message that was needed in I Corinthians. What those who criticized had not understood was how important it was to separate the people from their behaviour. Those who had strayed needed to be lovingly but firmly restored. The wrong messages they had picked up and repeated had to be strongly opposed, which Paul had done in his letter. This is spiritual ministry and it is a war. Leadership according to the 'flesh' is the reverse, attacking the person and ignoring the teaching. Spiritual warfare is the theme of this chapter, and there are some surprises. Who is the enemy and what weapons do we have?(10:1-4)

The enemy is the Devil,(I Pet.5:8) who 'prowls around like a roaring lion'. His forces are not physical in the first place but are ideas, human guesswork elevated to be regarded as unassailable truth. Modern examples would be Marxism, evolution and humanism. They cannot be attacked with military weapons but only with better ideas, God's truth in His word.(Eph.6:17) Victory in this war will not be by imprisoning people but capturing wrong ideas with truth and thus showing them to be powerless. Success will be measured not by territory captured but by people hearing and obeying the Lord Jesus Christ.(10:5,6)

If we find ourselves in the middle of a war, the most important question to ask is 'Whose side am I on?' Next we need to ask, 'Who else is on my side?' The Corinthian Christians were on the side of Christ, and everyone else, including Paul and his friends, who loved the Lord were their allies. Fighting our allies is suicide in war. The enemy loves it! Who is in command of our army? Christ Himself, and those to whom He gives authority.(Matt.28:18-20) Modern armies use their authority to bomb, shell and destroy. The authority Jesus has given us is to build up by teaching His word. So we are to 'destroy speculations' but build the people who have previously been fooled by wrong ideas. The purpose of Paul's tough letter was to do both.(10:7-10)

Hard though the Corinthians found this to accept Paul insisted that he was the same person when with them or when communicating from a distance, loving people and hating error. He was not however recommending himself to his commanding officer for a medal as some leaders did who promoted their own reputations. As he has said often before, the only place for boasting in Christian

ministry is in what Jesus Christ has done in us or others. 'Apart from Me you can do nothing.'(Jn.15:5) Advancing as an army is not about claiming new physical territory or building bigger organisations but preparing the way for Jesus to move into new men and women. Like any army such success is about teamwork where each builds on the groundwork done by others.(I Cor.3:5-10) It is always exciting to be looking for new people in whom the very first awareness of the gospel can be laid. Expect that as we do so there will be a response of faith which prepares those who hear for the next layer of understanding, from us or others. One day the Lord will award His own medals as He chooses., when He says 'Well done, good and faithful slave.'(Matt.25:21,23) As Christ's army we need to be very clear about the battle plan.(10:11-18)

In chapter 11 Paul introduced the topic of the biggest threat to even the strongest army, the double agent.

11:1-3 Q.1 What illustration did Paul use to describe his concern that they might be led astray into unfaithfulness? How does the Old Testament story of Eve and the serpent explain the way in which ambassadors of Christ can be led into working for the enemy?(Gen.3:1-6)

11:4 Q.2 What according to this verse is the first characteristic of an enemy agent?(Gal.1:6-9) Should we be tolerant when we hear such teaching?

11:5-9 Q.3 How did Paul behave when he came to Corinth which showed that he was not an enemy agent? How does this description help us to avoid becoming a cause of harm to the church of Jesus Christ? How was Paul able to support himself and his ministry if he did not charge for his services?(Acts20:18-35)

11:10-15 Q.4 What motivates true ambassadors of Jesus? How does this help us to recognize enemy agents? How do the Devil and those who follow him succeed in fooling even strong Christians at times? What does this strategy look like in practice?

11:16-23 Q.5 What example of boasting in a good sense did Paul use this time? What does boasting in a bad way look like? How in reality do enemy agents behave towards those whom they fool into following them? How does the world regard the behaviour of Christians by comparison? How do enemy agents try to use their credentials to gain acceptance?

11:24-30 Q.7 List the trials Paul went through in his ministry. Break them down into 3 groups, man made, natural threats and inner pressures. How would Christ's comfort match each pressure? Should we try to be strong when we face trials?

11:31-33 Q.8 Which final trial did Paul remind them of?(Acts 9:23-25) Why did he remember this one especially? How can we learn from his example?