

## 2 Corinthians 10:1-11:15 Defending the Gospel Fintry, 13/11/2011, pm

- "Need to and method in defending the gospel"

### Defending the Gospel

- Introduction...
- Explore the kinds of images we come up with round defending (war, weapons, walls) or justifying (court room, argument, adversarial)
- Paul worried the Corinthians are being deceived by some **false apostles**, and in danger of consequently straying from the **true gospel**
  - he is at a distance, his opponents are on the ground
  - and they appear strong, convincing, able... while he appears weak
- The false apostles have sown some lies about Paul amongst the Corinthians that undermine his position and influence:
  - particularly because they play into cultural values and assumptions - but ones that are actually at odds with God's values
- So Paul's defence of the gospel is really a challenge to the values that the Corinthians were slipping into, about what was really important
  - Paul is waging war, but doing so by subverting the assumptions on which his opponent's attack is built

### Just for show, or reality? (10:1-6)

- Accusation: Paul talks a big talk, but in reality his words are empty...
- Subversion: the scale on which you measure power is flawed, reality is the spiritual reality:
  - here Paul is setting up the course of his argument - "**the weapons we fight with are not the weapons of this world...**" (10:4)
- Its not intellectual knowledge, but obedience to Christ, that is real

### Just words, or actions too? (10:7-11)

- Paul points to a consistency between his words and his actions:
  - he lives what he preaches, grace that brings belonging to Christ, obedience in submission to the Lordship of Christ
  - his opponents claim hypocrisy - weighty/unimpressive
  - Paul points to consistency - obedience and faithfulness to Christ always

### True or false measures? (10:12-18)

- Paul faces down his enemies - for the sake of the Corinthians - because he is clear that the measures they are using for assessing themselves are false:
  - they are boasting about eloquence, about rhetorical power, about intellectual arguments....
  - Paul notes that those don't really matter, aren't of core importance
  - instead, in so far as Paul is willing to "**boast**" he boasts in being faithful to what God has called him - in other words the measure is not his own skill or ability, but of God's faithfulness in using him to spread the gospel

### True or false Jesus? (11:1-6)

- At core of the whole problem is the Jesus that the false apostles present is warped picture:
  - compared to the reality Paul presents...
  - its not spelled out here exactly what the "falseness" was - anything that diverges from Scripture
  - whether a moral diversion (round acceptable behaviour for a Christian)
  - whether an identity diversion (round who Jesus is - human & divine)
  - whether a ministry diversion (round what Jesus did, and what then should

prioritise)

- Ask someone we've been defending the faith (whether in "evangelism" or "apologetics" or whatever): "who does he/she say Jesus is?"

### **Of real value? (11:7-12)**

- Here Paul counters their estimation of what is important:
  - it appears the accusation is that Paul has lowered himself by not taking money from the Corinthians, in the value system of the day therefore not valuing himself and the message he bore....
  - Paul's counter is that your value system is off-beam
  - Paul did indeed avoid asking them for money - not because the message he bore lacked value, but precisely because it was so valuable and needed to be given to them without let or hindrance!
  - the very thing his accusers "accuse" him of he "boasts" of - because he knows what is really important!

### **Conclusion: Defending the gospel**

- Against false apostles, servants of the father of lies...
- **How do we do it?**
  - do our lives match our profession, are we people of integrity through and through?
  - do we assess ourselves on the right scales, about whether we are faithful (not about cleverness or impressiveness or...)
  - do we present a faithful picture of Jesus, at centre, Son of God, bearer of our sin, crucified and risen....
  - do we work for what really matters, not show or power or position or influence or respect, but serving the gospel
- **Where will we be called on to do it?**
  - over the water cooler
  - at the kitchen table
  - in the pub
  - in the routines of daily life