

## Introduction

In 2021, Safe Home published the results of a survey they took on the perception of authority.<sup>1</sup> It was found that only 17.7% of Americans trust members of Congress. Only 24.7% trust the U.S. President. Lawyers were the third least trusted, and only 26.4% of Americans trust lawyers. Governors and CEO's were the next two lowest ratings of public trust. On the other end of the spectrum, the most trusted people in America were paramedics and firefighters. 90.2% of Americans trust paramedics and 90.1% trust firefighters. Doctors were considered trustworthy by 85.1%. What is behind these attitudes of mistrust among Americans? The survey did not draw conclusions, but I believe that our text today provides the key to that answer. Most people believe that people in authority are there to use their power for their own well-being. They use their authority for selfish reasons, not the good of the people. Their policies and decisions are made to pad their wallets at the expense of everyone else. I believe that this is why paramedics, firefighters, and doctors were the most trusted groups. Americans believe that paramedics are there to save lives. Americans believe that firefighters, at the risk of their own life and safety, are there to save the lives and property of others. Our trust of authority has to do with what we believe about their motives and actions.

We are in the final section of 2 Corinthians and it is about Paul's warning and defense of his apostleship. He has been slandered and spoken against by some people who were trying to discredit Paul so that they could take control of the church. Paul sent a letter of sorrow to the Corinthians and told the church to discipline a certain person, which they did. In this letter, Paul tells the church to forgive and affirm their love for the person. But there were others behind this attack on Paul, and in Part 1, Paul warns them the church that he is coming. He would prefer to come with meekness and gentleness, but he is prepared to come very boldly if necessary. Then, he spoke about spiritual warfare. He said that though he lived in the flesh, the weapons of his warfare were not fleshly, but were divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. Paul was going to come as a soldier and do battle with those who were contending with him. Paul was going to destroy the speculations and lofty thoughts raised up against the knowledge of God.

In Part 2, we will cover the last twelve verses of chapter 10, where Paul is going to speak about his authority, and how that authority is to be used. Second, Paul is going to address how people are to commend themselves.

### Paul's Warning and Defense – Part 2

1. Paul's Authority (2 Cor 10:7-11)
2. Paul's Commendation (2 Cor 10:12-18)

(2 Cor 10:7-11) "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."

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.safehome.org/perception-of-authority/>

(2 Cor 10:12-18) “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 labors, 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.”

### 1. Paul's Authority (2 Cor 10:7-11)

Paul wants to come to the Corinthians in a meek and gentle way, but he is prepared to come in as a soldier, and to destroy the speculations and lofty thoughts that are raised up against the knowledge of God. He is ready to tear down the fortresses and strongholds. Paul does not fight with the weapons of the flesh, but with divinely powerful weapons. And now Paul turns to the authority he has to deal with these matters. Before he talks about his authority, he told the Corinthians that they were looking at things as if they are outwardly. In verse ten, Paul sarcastically tells them what his attackers have been saying about him. They said that his letters are weighty and strong, but his personal presence is unimpressive and his speech contemptible. In essence, they were saying that he was a weak and ineffectual leader, and that his personal presence was not impressive. They also said that his speech was contemptible. Paul tells them that they are looking at outward things. Paul's accusers may have also been looking at credentials, especially since they had suggested that he give them a letter of commendation. It is thought that the accusers said he was a self-appointed apostle, and not a true apostle. Paul tells those who are confident in themselves to consider this again within themselves. Just as they may be in Christ, so also is Paul. He was not an outsider; he was called by God, and he belongs to Christ. His accusers do not have this over Paul.

(2 Cor 10:7) “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.”

(2 Cor 10:10) “For they say, “His letters are weighty and strong, but his personal presence is unimpressive and his speech contemptible.”

Paul now addresses his authority, which he says has been given to him by the Lord. Paul belongs to God and his authority has come from God. Paul said that if he boasted about his authority, he would not be put to shame. The Greek word for authority is *exousia* (Strong's G1849), and it is used 103 times in the New Testament. It is translated as power sixty-nine times and authority twenty-nine times. It means to have the authority, jurisdiction, liberty, power, right, or strength. Paul does not dwell on the fact that he has authority, but on why he was given authority. He said that he was given this authority by the Lord to build them up. He was not given the authority so that he could destroy them. Paul repeats this in 2 Corinthians 13:10; he wants them to know how authority is to be used. I think that one reason that people do not trust authorities today is they see people in authority using it for selfish reasons, not to build up others. They think that authorities are willing to use people for their own personal gain, and are not there to serve them.

People in authority do have the power and authority to rule, legislate, govern, and correct, but God wants those in authority to use the authority that He gives them to build up others. God wants those in authority to encourage and edify others. The Greek word for building up is *oikodome* (Strong's G3619), which means to edify or to build up. Literally, it means to build a house. Firefighters and paramedics are saving lives, not sacrificing others for their own good. God's servants are not to be self-seeking, selfish, or have selfish ambition. They are to use their authority to build up others. If government officials, and other leaders, will use their authority to help others rather than themselves, then people will begin to trust them.

(2 Cor 10:8) "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,"

(2 Cor 13:10) "For this reason I am writing these things while absent, so that when present I *need* not use severity, in accordance with the authority which the Lord gave me for building up and not for tearing down."

Jesus told the twelve apostles, "the kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who have authority over them are called Benefactors. But it is not this way with you, but the one who is the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like the servant."

(Lk 22:25–26) "And He said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who have authority over them are called 'Benefactors.' {26} "But *it is* not this way with you, but the one who is the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like the servant."

In Mark's account, Jesus added His own example to this teaching on authority. He said, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many." God wants those in authority to humbly serve, and not to lord over people.

(Mk 10:42–45) "Calling them to Himself, Jesus said to them, "You know that those who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them; and their great men exercise authority over them. {43} "But it is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant; {44} and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all. {45} "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

In Peter's first letter, he exhorted the pastors not to lord over those allotted to their charge, but to prove to be examples to the flock. They are not to use their position for sordid gain. The message is consistent, those in authority are not to lord over people. They are not to use their authority to control, exercise dominion, or subjugate people for their own purposes. They are to lead, feed, and care for the flock, and to lead by example. They are to protect the flock, and lay their lives down for the flock. They are to use their authority to build up the flock, not destroy it. Those in authority are to humbly serve others and lead by example. If leaders in America were like this, the public perception of them would be very different.

(1 Pet 5:2–3) "shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to *the will of God*; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; {3} nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock."

While pastors are not to lord over the flock, the Lord commands the flock to obey and submit to their leaders, for they keep watch over their souls, and will give an account to God. The flock is to make it easy, so that it is a joy to watch over the flock. The pastors of a church do have authority, but they are to use the authority for the good of the flock.

(Heb 13:17) “Obey your leaders and submit *to them*, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.”

What kind of authority was Paul? In 2 Corinthians 7:2, Paul told the Corinthians that they had wronged no one, and had corrupted no one. Paul and his team did not take advantage of anyone. Paul could not be put to shame over how he had used his authority with the Corinthians, or any other church.

(2 Cor 7:2) “Make room for us *in your hearts*; we wronged no one, we corrupted no one, we took advantage of no one.”

Paul's tone in these last four chapters is decidedly different, evidenced by his sarcastic remarks. His accusers had said that his letters are weighty and strong, but his personal presence is unimpressive and his speech contemptible. Paul responds by saying that he did not wish to seem as if he would terrify them by his letters, and that people should consider that he is in word by letters when absent, and in deed when present. Paul is bold, and speaks with authority. He will come to Corinth in boldness, if necessary, but he would prefer to come in meekness and gentleness. The fact that Paul has been gentle with the Corinthians in person does not mean that he was a weak leader. It really points to Paul's humility as a leader. He did not lord over people, but was a humble servant-leader who led by example.

(2 Cor 10:9-11) “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.”

## 2. Paul's Commendation (2 Cor 10:12-18)

Paul said he was not going to so bold as to class or compare himself with them. We need to be careful about comparing or classing ourselves against others. You can always find someone who is better at something than you, and be discouraged. You can always find someone who is worse at something than you, and get prideful. We need to be very careful about comparing ourselves with others. Paul was not going to go down that road. He said that those who do that are without understanding.

(2 Cor 10:12) “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.”

In my first year of professional golf the Lord impressed upon me that I was not to compare myself with others. In Galatians 6, God tells us to examine our own work and not to boast in regard to others. Each of us will bear our own load. I had a friend that looked at the tournament field each week and determined who he could beat. I never did that. I looked at the course and came up with a game plan on how I could play the course. I examined my own work, and did not

compare myself with others. At the same time, the Lord was also impressing on me that my identity was not tied up in what I did, or how I did. My identity is in Christ. I am a child of God, a believer, a saint, and a member of the body of Christ. Many years later, when the Lord asked me to lay down the clubs and plant a church, it was not an issue for me because my identity was not as a professional golfer, but as a son of God.

(Gal 6:3–5) “For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. {4} But each one must examine his own work, and then he will have *reason for* boasting in regard to himself alone, and not in regard to another. {5} For each one will bear his own load.”

God also told me to do the very best I could, and become skillful. If I became skillful, I would not play before obscure men, but would rise in my profession. I needed to concentrate on my game, and not on comparing myself with others. This motivated me to work hard and develop my skills as a golfer.

(Pr 22:29) “Do you see a man skilled in his work? He will stand before kings; He will not stand before obscure men.”

Those that were attacking Paul were bold to commend themselves. They compared themselves with themselves, and by that standard, they could make themselves look good. They could make the standard to be eloquent speech, personal appearance, dress, or other outward things. They could make the standard whatever they wanted it to be in order to look good. They could pick some criteria that made Paul look bad and for them to look great. Paul was not going to go down that road and compare himself with them, or to commend himself.

These false teachers that were attacking Paul commended themselves. We need to be very careful about self-promotion. In Proverbs 27:2, God tells us to let another praise you, and not your own mouth; a stranger, and not your own lips.” God gave us a warning signal about people who boast about themselves, and commend themselves.

(Pr 27:2) “Let another praise you, and not your own mouth; A stranger, and not your own lips.”

Paul said that they would not boast beyond their measure, but within the measure of the sphere which God apportioned to them as a measure, which included reaching the Corinthians. Paul was the first person to take the gospel to Corinth, and he was the one who planted the church in Corinth. When he planted the church in Corinth, it became part of his sphere of ministry. Your sphere is the area of influence and ministry. If Paul was going to boast, it would be in what he had done in the sphere that God had apportioned to him. My current sphere of ministry is in Rome, Georgia. Specifically, it is in the east side of Rome. My sphere is not in New York or Europe, but in Rome, Georgia. My sphere also includes an area of the Philippines, where God opened up some opportunities to work with some pastors.

(2 Cor 10:13-14) “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;”

Paul was not going to boast or take credit for other men's labors, but only in the work he had done in the sphere God apportioned to him. Paul's accusers were wanting to discredit Paul and take credit for the work that Paul had done. Paul was not going to take credit for other men's work; he was not going to boast beyond his measure.

(2 Cor 10:15-18) "not boasting beyond *our* measure, *that is*, in other men's labors, 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."

Paul hoped that his sphere would be enlarged. He wanted to preach the gospel in the regions beyond the Corinthians. There were some conditions to his sphere being enlarged. First, there was the sphere that God had apportioned to him. God has a sphere for each of us. He called Jeremiah to be a prophet to the nations. He does not call everyone to that same sphere. There will be those who have the gift of prophecy in the local church. There will be those who have a prophetic ministry, and their sphere is beyond the local church. There are different spheres that are established by God. Jeremiah did not choose that enormous sphere; it was chosen by God before Jeremiah was even born.

(Jer 1:5) "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations."

Paul's call to apostolic ministry came while he was in his mother's womb. In Galatians 1, Paul said that God set him apart even from his mother's womb to preach to the Gentiles. His calling as an apostle was by the calling of God, and he was given grace to fulfill this calling by God.

(Gal 1:15–16) "But when God, who had set me apart *even* from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, was pleased {16} to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood,"

A second condition was that Paul's sphere would be enlarged as the faith of the Corinthians grew. Since they were Paul's work, as that work grew, his sphere would be increased. Some scholars believe that as the Corinthians grew in their faith and maturity, Paul would not be as burdened with them, and could focus his energies on new works, thus increasing his sphere. In either case, the Corinthians had a part to play in the future increase of Paul's sphere of ministry.

A third condition is our own faithfulness. I have never focused on increasing my sphere, but on being faithful with the sphere that God puts me in. Similar to my work as a golfer, if I become skillful in the work God has me doing, He will not keep me in obscurity, but will raise me up. In Luke 16, Jesus taught on faithfulness, and He gave three key areas of faithfulness. He said that those who are faithful with little will be faithful with much. Therefore, I try to focus on being faithful with little. If we have six people in a church plant, I want to be faithful with feeding and caring for the six. If we have sixty people, I want to be faithful with the sixty. We must be faithful with what we have. Jesus' second area of faithfulness is in the area of wealth. We must be faithful stewards of what God entrusts to us, using it wisely. We should give generously to the Lord, and honor Him with our wealth. Many today do not teach tithing, but I believe that we should give God a minimum of ten percent. We should give offerings above and beyond the tithe. We should be generous, and we should be faithful stewards. The third area of faithfulness is in what belongs to others. I sadly watch how people take care of rental cars, trucks, apartments, and houses. God wants us to faithfully take care of what belongs to others.

(Lk 16:10–12) “He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much. {11} “Therefore if you have not been faithful in the *use of* unrighteous wealth, who will entrust the true *riches* to you? {12} “And if you have not been faithful in *the use of* that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own?”

In the parable of the talents, God promised the one that was faithful with five talents that He would put him in charge of many things. Likewise, God promised the one that was faithful with two talents that He would put him in charge of many things. For me, we should focus on being faithful with the things God has given us to do, and let Him increase our sphere as He sees fit.

(Mt 25:20–23) “The one who had received the five talents came up and brought five more talents, saying, ‘Master, you entrusted five talents to me. See, I have gained five more talents.’ {21} “His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’ {22} “Also the one who *had received* the two talents came up and said, ‘Master, you entrusted two talents to me. See, I have gained two more talents.’ {23} “His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’”

Next, Paul said that he who boasts is to boast in the Lord. Those who were attacking Paul were boasting in themselves. Paul makes it clear that if we are going to boast, we are to boast in the Lord. Our lives and our words need to honor God, not ourselves. If we are going to boast, we should boast in what God has done.

(2 Cor 10:17) “But he who boasts is to boast in the Lord.”

In Jeremiah 9, the Lord said, “Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things.” Everything that we have is from God. Our riches are from God. Our wisdom is from God. Our talents and abilities are from God. Our opportunities are from God. If we are going to boast, we should boast in God.

(Jer 9:23–24) “Thus says the Lord, “Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; {24} but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things,” declares the Lord.”

Last, Paul said that it is not those who commend themselves that are approved, but he whom the Lord commends. Paul's attackers were putting Paul down, and commending themselves. They were measuring themselves with themselves and boasting. We need the Lord's commending.

(2 Cor 10:18) “For it is not he who commends himself that is approved, but he whom the Lord commends.”

Who does the Lord commend? God commends those that He approves. The word approved is *dokimos* (Strong's G1384), which means tested or approved. There are a number of ways that we become approved by God.

### a. Pleasing God

In 1 Thessalonians 2:4-6 Paul says that they (Paul, Sylvanus, Timothy) have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so they speak not as pleasing men but God who examines their hearts. Paul did not seek to please men, and he did not seek glory from men, but only the glory of God. One of the ways that we become approved by God is by living a life that is pleasing to God. Paul did not try to please men, but God. Sometimes we have to make difficult decisions, and we always need to seek to please God.

(1 Thess 2:4-6) "but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men but God, who examines our hearts. {5} For we never came with flattering speech, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed-- God is witness-- {6} nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, even though as apostles of Christ we might have asserted our authority."

Earlier in Paul's letter, he spoke about the lives we live in these earthly tents. He said that we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body. Therefore, we should have as our ambition to be pleasing to Him. It will be better for us when we appear before the judgment seat, but it is one of the many ways that we become approved by God. God commends those who always seek to please Him.

(2 Cor 5:9-10) "Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him. {10} For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad."

### b. Doing God's Will

In Romans 12:1-2, Paul tells us not to be conformed to the world, but to be transformed by the renewing of our mind so that we can prove the will of God, that which is good, acceptable, and perfect. The word used for prove is dokimazo, which comes from dokimos. It implies that there is a testing involved or proving before something is approved. As we are transformed by the renewing of our minds, we can prove God's will in our lives by doing that which is good, acceptable, and perfect.

(Rom 12:2) "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."

### c. Through our work/service

When God raises up leaders in a church, He raises up those who have been tested (dokimazo) or have proven their character and ability. In 1 Timothy 3:10, we see that deacons must first be tested (dokimazo) before they are raised up to the office of deacon. One of the tests is faithfulness. When a person is given responsibilities in the church, are they faithful in handling those responsibilities. Our work assignments in the church are a test. We prove our character before God by how we handle our responsibilities.

(1 Tim 3:10) "These men must also first be tested (dokimazo); then let them serve as deacons if they are beyond reproach."



In 1 Corinthians 3, Paul writes that “each man’s work will become evident.” How will it become evident? He says, “for the day will show it, because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test (dokimazo) the quality of each man’s work.” Our works are a way of assaying us. Our works will be tested and will be approved or not. If our works remain, we shall receive a reward.

(1 Cor 3:13-14) "each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it, because it is to be revealed with fire; and the fire itself will test (dokimazo) the quality of each man's work. {14} If any man's work which he has built upon it remains, he shall receive a reward."

#### **d. Persevering under trials**

James tells us that once we have persevered through trials, we will be approved. Once we have been approved, we will receive the crown of life. We find that trials in our life are part of the proving of our faith. Being approved by testing is similar to what a jeweler does. A jeweler will perform a number of different tests on metals and jewels to see if they are genuine. God uses the trials in our life to assay our faith and to approve us.

(James 1:12) "Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

Earlier in James, God exhorts us to consider it all joy when we encounter various trials because these trials test (dokimion, Strong's G1383) our faith, and the result is that we will gain endurance and maturity. These trials are how we are tested and approved by God. Think of trials as opportunities to become approved by God.

(James 1:2-4) “Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, {3} knowing that the testing (dokimion) of your faith produces endurance. {4} And let endurance have *its* perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”

#### **e. Through rightly dividing the Word of God**

Another way that we become approved by God is through rightly dividing the Word of God. The NASB says that we become approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth. Being able to teach, reprove, and exhort people the word of God accurately is a necessary qualification of church leadership. I like the way that the King James translates 2 Timothy 2:15. It reads, “study to shew thyself approved to God...rightly dividing the word of truth.” In order to handle accurately or rightly divide the Word of God, we must study the Word of God.

(2 Ti 2:15) “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.”

(2 Tim 2:15 KJV) “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”

The writer of Hebrews said that many of the people should have been teachers, but they were not. They still needed someone to teach them the elementary principles of the word of God. They needed milk, not solid food. He said that “solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.” If we are going to be approved to God as

workmen, who handle the word of God accurately, we must have our senses trained through practice. It is regular, consistent study of God's word that helps us to train our senses.

(Heb 5:12-14) "For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. {13} For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. {14} But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil."

### **Conclusion and Applications**

In our passage, Paul wrote about his authority, and how that authority is to be used to build people up, not tear them down. That is an important lesson for everyone to learn and practice today. People would have less of a problem submitting to authority if they knew that their authorities were always going to use it to build people up. Selfish, self-seeking, authorities create distrust. Paul was humble, transparent, and was always looking out for ways to help people grow in their walk with the Lord. There was no selfish ambition in his use of authority. While Paul wanted to come to Corinth in a meek and gentle way, he was willing to come boldly if necessary.

How are you using the authority that God has given you? Are you using your resources to build up others, or for selfish purposes? God wants us to build up others, not tear them down.

Second, Paul addressed how people are to commend themselves. They are not to commend themselves or to measure themselves against themselves. They were not to measure themselves against others. Paul's attackers had set up some outward metrics to make themselves look good and to make Paul look like a poor leader. Paul was not going to measure himself against these attackers. Paul's commendation came from the Lord, which is commendation that all of us should look for. Each of us have a sphere of influence and ministry that we have received from the Lord. We need to be faithful to what calls each of us to do. The Corinthians were part of Paul's sphere of ministry, as he was the one that first preached the gospel to them. Paul had a desire to go to regions beyond Corinth, and he hoped that as their faith grew, his sphere would be enlarged.

Paul's commendation came from the Lord. It is not he who commends himself that is approved, but he whom the Lord commends. We looked at a few other passages to see some different ways that we become approved by God. We are approved by God when we aim to please Him. We are approved by God when we carry out and prove His will in our lives. We are approved by God by our faithful service to Him. We are approved by God by rightly dividing the word of God.

How is your approval with God? Are you being faithful in the things that God has called you to do? Are you carrying out God's will for your life? Are you studying the word of God? Are you able to rightly divide the word of God and accurately handle God's word? How are you handling the trials in your life? Are you rejoicing in trials, knowing that they are helping you to become mature and approved by God? How is your approval with God?

### **Concluding Prayer**

Father God, help us to build up others. When we are in positions of authority, help us to use it to build up others. Father, we want to be approved by You. Help us lives that please you. Help us to be men and women of the word that rightly divide it. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

## **Paul's Warning and Defense – Part 2**

### **Introduction (2 Cor 10:7-18)**

1. **Paul's Authority** (2 Cor 10:7-11, 2 Cor 13:10, Lk 22:25-26, Mk 10:42-45, 1 Pet 5:2-3, 2 Cor 7:2)
  
2. **Paul's Commendation** (2 Cor 10:12-18, Gal 6:3-5, Pr 22:29, Pr 27:2, Jer 1:5, Gal 1:15-16, Lk 16:10-12, Mt 25:20-23, Jer 9:23-24)
  - a. **Pleasing God** (1 Thess 2:4-6, 2 Cor 5:9-10)
  - b. **Doing God's Will** (Rom 12:2)
  - c. **Through our work/service** (1 Tim 3:10, 1 Cor 3:13-14)
  - d. **Persevering under trials** (James 1:12, 1:2-4)
  - e. **Through rightly dividing the Word of God** (2 Ti 2:15, Heb 5:12-14)

### **Conclusion and Applications**