

False Teachers



SABBATH—SEPTEMBER 12

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: 2 Corinthians 10:1–11, 13–17; 2 Corinthians 11:1–15, 22–28; 2 Corinthians 12:20, 21.

MEMORY VERSE: “We do not use the things of [from] this world [earth] in our fighting, but we use the power [strength] of God. This power can break down the walls where the enemy hides” (2 Corinthians 10:4, WE).

FOR SURE, PAUL had more than enough problems to solve. Now another problem came into the church: false teachers. The false teachers fought against Paul and His work for God. Worse, these false teachers convinced church members in Corinth to believe their lies! Paul says his fight against this problem was the same as a spiritual war.

Paul knew that the false teachers weren't just fighting against him. They fought against Jesus Himself. As a leader, Paul didn't care about making people listen to him or having a lot of power. He knew that his message could save lives. Paul also knew that God sent him to preach this message: “This letter is from me, Paul. God chose me to be an apostle [teacher and leader] of Christ [the Savior] Jesus. That is what he wanted” (1 Corinthians 1:1, EASY).

What should we do when false teachings come into the church? The church must solve the problem with love. At the same time, the church must follow Bible truth. Bible truth must not be mixed with lies. Then Bible truth will have the power to save lives and give people the hope of everlasting life.



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SPIRITUAL WAR (2 Corinthians 10:1–11)

Paul was gentle and loving with the Corinthians. So, some church members thought Paul was shy and had no courage. They thought he was too afraid and weak to solve problems. Read 2 Corinthians 10:1–11. What words in these verses show us that Paul had the courage to solve the problem with the false teachers in the church at Corinth?

Paul starts 2 Corinthians with these words: “I, Paul, need to ask you something” (EASY). Paul is worried about the false teachings in the church. Paul’s enemies accused him of being a mean and nasty bully when he wrote his letters from far away. But they said he was a coward when he talked face-to-face with people (2 Corinthians 10:10, 11). Paul says he is not being weak when he is gentle and loving. He is behaving the same way Jesus did.

We must not be afraid to punish false teachers (2 Corinthians 10:2). But we must punish them with a spirit of love in our hearts. Jesus had this same spirit (2 Corinthians 10:1). Jesus said, “ ‘I am gentle [loving] and do not have pride’ ” (Matthew 11:29, NLV). But Jesus also had courage. He turned over the tables of the money changers in the temple. He said they were robbers (Matthew 21:12, 13). Jesus also told the Jewish leaders they were liars. He compared them to graves that were beautiful on the outside only (Matthew 23:23–27). Paul also knows that we are in a spiritual war, just as Jesus did. So, we need to put on God’s battle suit (Ephesians 6:12–17).

In 2 Corinthians 10, Paul uses military words. That’s because we are in a spiritual war against evil. In this fight, we are trying to win people for Jesus. People must choose between life or death. So, we must fight against lies and false teachings. We must destroy these lies and false teachings with Bible truth. When we show that false ideas are wrong, “We change the way that people think, so that they want to obey” Jesus (2 Corinthians 10:5, EASY).

In this spiritual fight, Paul acts with Jesus’ strength and power. This power helps the church grow strong (2 Corinthians 10:8). Church leaders must remember that their strength and power come from Jesus. So, they must empty their hearts of all pride, the same as Jesus did.

How can we be loving and at the same time strong when we punish false teachers? Why must we be both?



Jesus turned over the tables of the money changers in the temple.

BRAGGING ONLY ABOUT THE LORD (2 Corinthians 10:13–17)



Paul's love for Jesus caused him to talk all the time about the Good News that Jesus saves us from sin.

Yesterday, we saw that Paul and his travel partners were in a spiritual war. They used God's weapons to fight against evil. Today, we will learn that false teachers brag about their skills and ideas. But Paul brags only about the Lord. As Paul wrote, "If a person brags, he should brag only about the Lord" (2 Corinthians 10:17, ICB).

Sad to say, some preachers brag about their preaching. Why is this behavior so bad for the church? What problems does it cause? Read 2 Corinthians 10:13–17.

Some people are surprised that Paul brags in these verses. In Bible times, people often bragged about their skills in public. Special rules controlled what they could say. (The rules helped protect them from upsetting their audience.) Paul knew about the rules. He followed them. But Paul doesn't brag about the things the false teachers bragged about. Paul brags only about Jesus. Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 10:17 come from the Old Testament: " 'But if someone wants to brag, let him brag about this: Let him brag that he understands and knows me. Let him brag that I am the Lord. Let him brag that I am kind and fair. Let him brag that I do things that are right on earth. This kind of bragging pleases me,' says the Lord" (Jeremiah 9:24, ICB). Paul uses this quote from the Old Testament to show that Jesus is the reason for everything he does.

So, when Paul brags, he really is bragging about Jesus, and not himself. The false teachers compare their teachings to the teachings of other teachers. Paul thinks this behavior is silly (2 Corinthians 10:12)!

In 2 Corinthians 10:14–16, Paul says that preaching the Good News is the most important part of his work in Corinth and everywhere else. Paul's love for Jesus caused him to talk all the time about the Good News that Jesus saves us from sin. The false teachers in Corinth praised their own skills and teachings. Paul didn't need to brag about himself. The Lord accepted him and gave him his work (2 Corinthians 10:12, 18; 1 Corinthians 1:1). Paul was loyal to this work to the end of his life (2 Timothy 4:7).

Read again 2 Corinthians 10:12–18. How can church leaders and members avoid the mistakes of the false teachers? Why is it so wrong to brag about ourselves?

**WARNING AGAINST FALSE TEACHERS
(2 Corinthians 11:1–15)**

The New Testament has many warnings against false teachers in Christian communities. Jesus Himself warned His followers about this problem (Matthew 7:15–20). The New Testament writers also talked about this topic (Galatians 1:6–9; 1 Timothy 6:3–5; 2 Peter 2:1–3).

What does Paul say about his problems with the false teachers? Read 2 Corinthians 11:1–15 for the answer.

Paul warns against what the false teachers are doing. At the same time, Paul says that his work is all about Jesus. Paul compares the church in Corinth to a bride. Then Paul compares himself to the bride's father. Paul says that he has the job of giving her to Jesus, who is the same as the groom (2 Corinthians 11:2). Paul loves the church so much (2 Corinthians 11:11). So, he did everything he could to help her. That's why he chose not to accept any money or support from the church (2 Corinthians 11:7–12).

On the other hand, Paul compares the false teachers to the snake that lied to Eve (2 Corinthians 11:3). The false teachers in Corinth tell lies, the same as the snake. Their hearts are full of evil (2 Corinthians 11:3, 4). Paul was worried about the false teachers. Paul didn't want them to trick the Corinthians and lead them away from Jesus.

The false teachers preached a different message than Paul preached. They taught about a different Jesus and a different Good News. Just because someone preaches about Jesus doesn't mean that God gave him his message. That's why Jesus warned, "Some people say to me, 'Master, Master!' But not all of them will come into the kingdom of heaven. Only the people who obey God, my Father in heaven, will come in. They do what he wants them to do" (Matthew 7:21, EASY). In Galatians 1:6–9, Paul says that whoever preaches a false message about the Good News is under a curse. Sad to say, some Christians in Corinth allowed people to preach and teach this false message.

Paul warns against these false leaders (2 Corinthians 11:13). They pretend to be followers of Jesus. But they are really servants of Satan (2 Corinthians 11:14, 15). Paul says, "God will punish them in the end" (2 Corinthians 11:15, EASY). Strong words! What does Paul's warning tell us about what we should think and do about false teachings in the church?



Paul compares the church in Corinth to a bride. Then Paul compares himself to the bride's father.

SUFFERING FOR THE GOOD NEWS (2 Corinthians 11:22–28)

As we saw yesterday, Paul warned that the false teachers were servants of Satan (2 Corinthians 11:1–15). Now Paul makes fun of the false teachers. He brags in the same way the false teachers do (2 Corinthians 11:16–21). Paul does that to show the Corinthians that they were silly to pay attention to anything the false teachers said. If the Corinthians respected the false teachers, they should respect Paul more. Paul suffered much for the Good News. His suffering shows that he is a loyal servant of Jesus (2 Corinthians 11:22, 23).

Read 2 Corinthians 11:22–28. What is Paul saying in these verses?



Paul doesn't brag about what he did for Jesus. Paul brags about what Jesus did for him.

Paul has the same Jewish ancestors as the false teachers (2 Corinthians 11:22). But Paul served Jesus more than they served Him (2 Corinthians 11:23). Paul did more work than they did. Paul went to jail more. The beatings that Paul suffered were far worse than the ones they suffered.

But Paul has more to say. He makes a list of the things he suffered. His list includes five beatings. Paul got whipped 39 times during each of these five beatings (2 Corinthians 11:24). Paul also was beat with sticks. He was hit with stones. He was on ships that broke at sea. He was in danger in deep waters (2 Corinthians 11:25) and from rivers. On his journeys, he was in danger from robbers, Jews, non-Jews, the desert, and false believers (2 Corinthians 11:26). Paul worked hard. He got tired. He worked all night and didn't sleep. He was hungry and thirsty. Sometimes he didn't have enough food. He was cold and without clothes at times (2 Corinthians 11:27). During these hard times, he always worried about the churches (2 Corinthians 11:28).

Paul suffered these things because he was a loyal servant for Jesus. If Paul really wanted to brag about his sufferings, he'd have a lot to say! As we will see, Paul doesn't brag about what he did for Jesus. Paul brags about what Jesus did for him.

Do you suffer for the Good News about Jesus? What did your experience teach you? How can Paul's example help you be at peace with your own suffering?

TROUBLEMAKERS IN THE CHURCH (2 Corinthians 12:20, 21)

In 2 Corinthians 12:14–13:10, Paul tells the church that he is coming to visit them. This will be Paul’s third visit (2 Corinthians 12:14; 2 Corinthians 13:1). People are causing trouble in the church. Paul wants to come to Corinth again to solve the problem. Everything Paul did and said was meant to make the church grow strong (2 Corinthians 12:19).

What sins were causing trouble in the Corinthian church? Read 2 Corinthians 12:20, 21.

The list of sins in 2 Corinthians 12:20, 21 is much the same as other lists in Paul’s letters (Romans 1:29–31; Galatians 5:19–21). The first two sins on Paul’s list were already problems in Corinth in the past. The members were jealous and fighting again. Paul is afraid that things won’t be much different when he arrives in Corinth for his third visit (2 Corinthians 12:20). If things aren’t different, Paul warns that he is ready to punish the Corinthians (2 Corinthians 10:6).

Paul is worried that some of the members hadn’t really changed. He was afraid that they continued to do evil (2 Corinthians 12:21). Their past sins included sex sins. These sins can cause separation in the church.

Paul talks about how punishment can help church members heal and come back to God (2 Corinthians 13:1–4). Being weak is no excuse for living in sin. God will give us His strength to win the fight against any sin (2 Corinthians 13:4). The sex sins in the church were proof that some members weren’t trusting in Jesus’ power. Paul wanted these sinning church members to give up their sins. Paul wanted them to come back to God. God’s love and power could give them the strength to be obedient. The last thing Paul wanted to do was to punish these church members. That’s why Paul tries to convince them to stop sinning first: “Now we pray to God that you will not do any wrong things. . . . We want you to do what is right. . . . We pray that you will become completely as you should be” (2 Corinthians 13:7–9, ERV). This prayer is very beautiful!

Read 2 Corinthians 13:5. Paul asks the Corinthians to look at their hearts to see if they are living in the faith. What does that mean? How can you know if you are?



God’s love and power could give sinning church members the strength to be obedient.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, “The Laodicean Church,” page 125, in *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, September 30, 1873.

“People accept and believe false teachings. But they don’t need to. Not when the Bible clearly teaches us what is truth. People will not be tricked or fooled if they compare their personal beliefs to the Bible. The Bible shows us if our beliefs are true or false. But some people hold on tight to their false ideas. They refuse to accept what the Bible says. Many people accept false teachings about the Bible because those ideas agree with their own personal ideas. Some people accept lies and cause other people to accept them, too. When we study the Bible, we should empty our hearts of a selfish spirit and all pride. We must give up the wish to try to find something new in the Bible that no one thought about before. We must accept that our ideas may not be correct.”—Ellen G. White, *Counsels to Writers and Editors*, pages 36, 37, adapted.



“People will not be tricked or fooled if they compare their personal beliefs to the Bible.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Read 2 Corinthians 10:1–6 again. What is Paul’s plan in these verses for fighting the spiritual “war” (EASY) for God’s truth? How can we use Paul’s plan to fight our own spiritual wars?
- ② The Bible says that before Jesus comes back, many false teachers will come into the church. These false teachers will try to lead God’s people away from Bible truth. What can your local church do to protect church members from false teachers who may be in your church? Why is protecting church members from false teachings so important to our finishing God’s work on this earth?
- ③ Why did Paul brag about his long list of sufferings (2 Corinthians 11:16–33)? Also, what does it mean to brag about the Lord?
- ④ Why is it important for church members to look closely at their lives to see if they are living in the faith (2 Corinthians 13:5)? How will that help us in our walk with Jesus?

BLESS YOU!—PART 2

Rob and Bethany went to Copenhagen, Denmark, to start new churches. Before going to Denmark, they started a church in British Columbia. There, Rob and Bethany learned how to build friendships with people that helped them accept Jesus.

In British Columbia, Rob and Bethany became friends with a man who grew up in a Seventh-day Adventist home. The man's religious experiences in the past left him doubting and unhappy. The Seventh-day Adventists he knew growing up were worried about the end times and about being saved. They had no peace. When the young man grew up, he left the church completely.

Over time, the man started to see something real and beautiful in the way that Rob and Bethany lived. Rob and Bethany invited the man into their lives. They shared meals, conversation, and their lives with him.

The man watched Rob and Bethany carefully. He listened to what they said. Rob said, "Our new friend saw that what we were doing was real. We weren't fake Christians. We were trying to live the same as Jesus. We really cared about this man and wanted to be his friend."

Then something terrible happened in this man's life. The man didn't go to a church for help. He came to the family he trusted: Rob and Bethany. The man started to ask questions about faith and God. Soon, the man started to believe again. This time, his faith was in the Jesus he never knew before.

Now this man is a Christian who is filled with love for Jesus. His whole life is changed.

How did this happen? With little things: Rob and Bethany listened, served, and lived the Good News in their daily lives.

Rob says, "We are so excited to be part of someone's spiritual journey. Start with the basics: prayer, listening, eating together, and serving. When the time comes, share your faith. That's what Jesus did. Today, hearts are changed in the same way."

Today in Copenhagen, Rob and Bethany meet new friends in their neighborhood. Their home is open for fellowship and shared meals. Rob and Bethany are always looking to make new friends. They love to listen to, serve, support, and share with their new friends. Their past experiences show them that this loving plan is the best way to win people to Jesus today. Rob and Bethany pray daily that God will bless them with more real friendships as they start new churches for Him.

Please pray for our Bible workers who serve in places where people do not think they need Jesus in their lives. To learn more, visit GMsda.org/refocus.

INSIDE
Story

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Rob and Bethany invited the man into their lives. They shared meals, conversation, and their lives with him.