Lownes Free Church Sunday Morning – September 9, 2018

The Apostle Paul’s ***Second*** letter to the *Corinthians*

how the Cross changes everything

Text: 2 Corinthians 10:1-18 “The Lion in the Lamb”

The Background: True authority is neither pushy nor proud.

Paul’s quiet manner reflected his humility, and his desire to establish believers and churches in the power of God, not persuasion or personality. While he certainly was versed in rhetoric, and was an able speaker and writer, he purposefully avoided using the flamboyant techniques of his day to sway people. But the written word is different from the spoken word, and its truth had made a difference to the Corinthians. This point was exaggerated and used by his critics and false teachers (2:17; 3:1; 4:1-3; 6:11-18) as an indicator of inconsistency. That was far from the case, as he explains!

Courage: The Cross enables us to be righteously bold in God.

The Incarnation shows God both wise and loving. Cloaking His glory in humanity, He bridged the chasm between us and Him. And just as people preyed upon Jesus’ apparent weakness, they will prey upon ours. But the weakness is only temporary, and purposeful. Just as a lion needs no defending, neither does God. We can proclaim His truth fearlessly, since it is in our human weakness that He wins over the proud human spirit. Paul is teaching the Corinthians how he works, and how God works: in His greatest weakness, His greatest victory was won. This is how and why the Cross changes everything.

The Narrative: (Reading 2 Corinthians is like hearing one side of a phone conversation. But we don’t really have to guess much, since Paul is both explicit and passionate. That said, we’ll be paraphrasing each section to sort out the argument and the not-so-hidden assumptions the Corinthians were making about Paul and his actions.)

(1) For my part (since I’ll be seeing you soon), I’m begging you (in the humility and meekness of Jesus) to reconsider your attitude so that I don’t have to be “bold” among you. I’m criticized for strong letters but a weak presence, but I promise we will set that record straight. They use fleshly methods (innuendo, lies) to win you over, but we rest solely in the power of God’s word, which destroys all opposition! Be on God’s side of this argument!

(7) Take a close look at what’s happening. Any “teacher” who professes to belong to Jesus should acknowledge our authority to establish you as a church, for I’m not backing down on the commission Christ gave me (when I was converted and made an apostle). And you know my letters are not to frighten you. He needs to know that we are what we are, in letter AND presence.

(12) When we boast of our “authority” (in serving you), it is a boast of our rightful commissioning by God. We are not the ones com-paring ourselves with others, which is never wise. We came there to preach the gospel, and we return in the hopes that you will join with us in taking that message even further (even to Spain). There is no other agenda, no other purpose for our ministry. After all, it’s God’s approval that matters, not man’s.

The Challenge: How do I respect, respond to, and apply authority?

***Memory Verses: Romans 13:1***

When encountering a rightful authority. . .

Am I open and teachable or automatically cynical?

Do I seek to support or undermine?

Do I see the person as God’s helper to me or a threat to my will?

When seeking to influence others from a position of authority. . .

Am I meek and gentle or authoritarian and arrogant?

Do I act truly in others’ interests or only my own?

Do I fulfill God’s purposes in my commission or role?