

## Confident In Christ

2Corinthians 10:7-18

How many of you have ever heard the expression, “You are getting too big for your britches”?

It’s a weird phrase if you are not familiar with it.

Britches is an old English word meaning pants.

If we took the phrase literally it would mean a person has put on a few pounds and no longer fits into his pants.

But the phrase actually has nothing to do with fitting into clothing, it has to do with one’s attitude.

It means a person’s ego is getting to big, that they are thinking too much of themselves, or are more confident in themselves than they should be.

I’ve seen that many times in the lives of others and I’ve been guilty of it myself on more than one occasion.

I remember one time when I was fourteen or fifteen I was playing a golf match against a young man who was two or three years older than me.

It was a match play event which means that the winner is decided by the number of holes won rather than the total score.

He had the advantage in a few ways. He was bigger, stronger, could hit the ball farther, and had a better set of clubs.

So maybe it was because he was expected to win that he felt the need to start playing mind games when we were either even or I was up one after eight or nine holes

He had been trash talking for a few holes and I didn’t say anything back until the eleventh hole.

When you stand on the tee of the eleventh hole of that golf course you have to hit it over a pond and there is another pond that follows the right side of the fairway quite a ways down.

I was first up on the tee because I had won the last hole and as I was putting my ball on a tee and getting ready to hit he said, “That is a lot of water.”

On some days that might have messed me up, but that day I hadn’t missed a fairway and was really confident in all the practice I had put in.

Now I admit the right thing to do would have been to just tee off without responding, but what I thought was a really good response popped into my head and without hesitation I said it.

I said, “Yep that is a lot of water it is going to be tough to get your ball out of that.”

I then proceeded to hit the perfect drive in the middle of the fairway.

Then it was his turn. He teed up his ball took a couple of practice swings stepped up to the ball and hit it about ten yards right into the first pond.

When it happened the first time I was filled with delight.

When he did two more times in a row and had to concede the hole before we left the tee box I felt a little bad.

He never recovered from that and I went on to win the next three or four holes in a row and the match was over.

You might say he was a little big for his britches that day and it was his undoing.

[All of us can likely relate to that. We all at times can be too full of ourselves and overconfident in our ability. The opposite can also be true, we can be too pessimistic about who we are and what we can accomplish. Both mistakes come from the same root cause and that is our tendency as human beings to focus on ourselves. When that is the case it can cause all sorts of problems in our lives and the lives of others around us. That is what we find in our text this morning **2Corinthians 10:7-18**. In these verses the apostle Paul continues to deal with some people in the Church of Corinth who were getting too big for their britches. We can see here some of the problems with being confident in ourselves and we can also see the proper place to put our confidence. Christians are actually supposed to be a confident people, but our confidence is not supposed to be in ourselves, it is supposed to be in the LORD. Being confident in Christ can do all sorts of good things for us and so it is to our great benefits to take the lessons of this text to heart. Here is the first lesson from these verses, that...]

### **Point #1 – Confidence in Christ is built on apostolic authority. (Verses 7-8)**

Those who have truly put their trust in Jesus want to know Him as He has made Himself known through His chosen servants, rather than a Jesus of their own imagination.

Commentators point out that the beginning of verse 7 can be translated in two ways.

It can either be a statement or command.

If it is a statement which is how the NIV, NAS, and KJV translate the verse then the apostle is telling these believers that they are making the mistake of only looking at appearances.

If it is a command then Paul is telling these believers that they need to open their eyes to the obvious facts in front of them.

The ESV here takes it as a command saying, “Look at what is before your eyes.”

Whether they are looking at the wrong things or failing to see what is plainly in front of them it is clear that they need to be reminded of the right way to look at the situation. (**Verse 7**)

One of the problems that was happening in this church is that there were people who were trying to drive a wedge of division between the church and Paul.

Here the apostle is trying to show that how unwise it would be to let that happen.

Do you think you are a Christian? Do you think that you belong to Jesus? Well, if you really think that you need to remember that Paul and his fellow gospel workers belong to Jesus as well.

This is no simple matter of opinion or feeling. Paul is basing this on a personal and powerful encounter with the Risen LORD.

Paul is not an apostle of the church because he woke up one morning and thought to himself, "I think I'll be an apostle in the church."

If you know his testimony then you know that he was actually doing to exact opposite to following Jesus, he was trying to destroy the church and Jesus physically appeared to him with the blinding light of His glory, personally spoke to the apostle, and personally taught Him the gospel that he commissioned him to proclaim.

Not only that, but Paul went to the other apostles who were with Jesus during His earthly ministry and who were also commissioned by the risen LORD and they accepted his testimony about being personally chosen by Jesus.

If anyone can say with certainty that they belong to Jesus it is Paul.

To that he adds this in **verse 8**.

There is a bit more here than the certain fact of Paul belonging to Jesus, there is also the fact that Jesus had given him 'authority' for the building up of the church.

That is actually what the word 'apostle' means. It means one sent under authority.

Jesus gave Paul the authority to speak and act on His behalf for the building of the church.

He can neither cast aside that authority nor be ashamed of it because it comes directly from Jesus.

The point he is trying to make here is that if you really belong to Jesus, if you truly want to know Jesus as He is, then it is impossible to cast aside the apostles who He chose to establish the church.

Jesus has graciously preserved that authority down through the centuries for us in the New Testament.

This then must be the foundation upon which our confidence in Christ is built.

Any other picture of Jesus is mere imagination.

[A number of years ago I read a book called ‘A New Kind of Christianity’. In it the author recalled being frustrated with the gospel of repentance from sin until he had a conversation with a friend who told him, “That is Paul’s gospel not Jesus’ gospel.” The idea being that Paul and Jesus were preaching different gospels that were in many ways opposed to each other. Just get rid of Paul and all will be well! On another occasion I listened to a sermon in which the teacher said something like, “Paul is a hateful bigot and a misogynist and I don’t have to listen to him at all.”]

That kind of stuff that is happening today is the exact same thing some people were trying to pull in the early church.

If someone can drive a wedge between the Christian and apostolic authority then who becomes the authority in the church?

The person trying to drive the wedge is the person who becomes the authority.

They will tell you about their Jesus and how you should listen to them and not the Bible.

What you are left with is an idol painted with the philosophy of the day rather than God the Son in all His glory, who died and was raised to life and has been exalted to the highest place to reign in power and glory forever.

[The Jesus worth trusting in brothers and sisters is the Jesus of the Bible. The real historical person who is truly divine and truly human who personally set apart men to preach the gospel, write the New Testament, and build the church. Paul is one of those men and you can be confident in the Jesus he writes to the churches about. If you trust and obey the Scriptures you can be confident that you belong to Christ, that He loves you with an immeasurable love, and that He will keep all the promises He makes to His people. Once you know the real Jesus in whom you can trust then trusting Him will do some good things for you. One of those things we learn in the next couple of verses. We learn that...]

## **Point #2 – Confidence in Christ produces consistent character. (Verses 9-11)**

When we are trusting Jesus we will not feel the need to change who we are to accommodate people or situations.

*The Corinthians have experienced Paul exercising the authority given to him by Jesus through letters.*

If you take the time to read through 1Corinthians you will see that he does say some pretty hard things at times.

In addressing divisions in the church in 1Corinthians 3 he warns them that if someone destroys the church, “God will destroy him.”

In 1Corinthians 6 he tells them that persisting in unrepentant sin will lead to eternal destruction.

In chapter 11 he warns them against making a mockery of the Lord's Supper and the consequences that will come as a result.

He has said many forceful things to these believers and he takes some sentences here to clarify what his intentions are in writing those things. **(Verse 9-10)**

His goal has not been to 'appear to be frightening' them.

That is a well-worn line used by many over the years.

They will say that the church uses things like the judgement of God and His wrath to scare people into doing what the church wants.

It is true some have used fearful things in that way, but that is not the goal of the apostles or those who faithfully relay the gospel.

Paul's goal is to say truthful things so that people will know Christ and discover the freedom and joy of living in obedience to Him.

Should you be scared hell? Yes you should, but not to be manipulated by men.

Instead, the fear of hell should drive you to the cross to experience the glorious forgiveness and restoration that comes from Christ's death and resurrection.

To know the life changing power of God, to be made into new creatures to enjoy the glory of God forever.

That is the goal of the apostle whether he is writing these believers letters or he is with them in person.

That is why he says this to those who think there is a difference between his letters and his visits. **(Verse 11)**

What he is saying here is that he is consistent in what he says whether it is in person or through a letter.

It is true that tone and mannerisms can't be communicated in a letter in the same way they can be in person, but that doesn't mean that the content of his in person teaching and hand written letters are different.

He is not trying to be one way when he is with them and another way in his letters.

He does not talk out of both sides of his mouth.

Why? Because his goal in life is to serve the saviour he has given up everything in his life to serve.

Putting all of his hope and trust in Jesus frees him to be the same man day to day.

That is one of the ways you can gauge how much you really trust Jesus, does He matter just as much to you no

matter where you may find yourself, or does His importance vary depending on who is around.

[Over the years I have had occasion to speak with other pastors and church leaders about serious moral and theological concerns. In many of those conversations I experienced a disturbing trend. People would tell me their view on a subject, but then say, “Keep this between us.” They would say one thing in public and another in private. It was extremely troubling and I believe very harmful to their churches.]

I believe these verses are showing us that the person who really believes they belong to Christ will be the same person they are at home that they are in church.

They will believe the same gospel at work that they do in private.

They will be truthful even when it is costly.

They won’t say behind someone’s back what they are unwilling to say to their face.

[It is good for us to evaluate ourselves on a regular basis in this regard. How consistent is our character in the different areas of our lives. How consistent would others say our character is? If it is all over the map it might be worth asking, “How much confidence do I have in Jesus?” That brings us to one more lesson concerning confidence in Christ. It is closely related to the second lesson of consistent character, the lesson is that...]

### **Point #3 – Confidence in Christ fixes our attention on Christ. (Verses 12-18)**

When we are truly putting our hope in Jesus, then we will always be most concerned about pleasing Him.

While it is clear that Paul feels the need to contend with some of the criticisms that have been raised against him, he also makes clear here that he is not interested in comparing himself with others. (Verse 12)

It is so tempting to compare ourselves to other people isn’t it?

It would seem some of Paul’s critics were doing that.

Commentator Murray Harris takes the phrase about “measuring themselves by one another” to mean that they were writing their own standards and then bragging about how well they were living up to them.

That is like fast food religion. All the stuff you want and none of the stuff you don’t.

If you get a few people together that share a similar standard you can get an echo chamber going where you tell each other how great you are.

They were also “comparing themselves with one another.”

That is another great temptation we have as people.

We look around at other people and gage how well we are doing with what we see in others.

Have you noticed how easy it is to find someone who you think is way worse than you?

Whether we are actually right about that assessment or not is another question, but it is easy to look around and think to ourselves that we are doing better than other people.

Look again at what it says there at the end of verse 12. When people do that kind of comparing “they are without understanding.”

*How we stack up with other people is irrelevant.*

God’s standard isn’t be a little less bad than other people, His standard is Jesus.

That is Who we should be looking to.

Doing that will keep us from being full of ourselves and it will keep us giving thanks for the grace of God.

We will discover that Jesus is our only reason to have confidence before the LORD.

Instead of comparing himself to others he writes this in **verses 13-17.**

*Instead of looking to what others are doing and comparing himself to that, he is looking to what the LORD has ‘assigned’ to him.*

God called Paul and his co-workers to preach the gospel in places where it had never been preached.

The Corinthians know that first hand because Paul was the first one to bring the gospel to them.

While he does hope that the Corinthians will keep growing in their faith and that they will help him go even further with bringing the gospel to new people, his point here is that he is looking to God first and foremost in his ministry.

That brings him to this conclusion in **verse 18.**

At the end of the day what people think or believe doesn’t really matter, it is God’s opinion that is important.

[The people of Israel found that out when three men named Korah, Dathan, Abiram challenged Moses. They got 250 elders together complaining that Moses and Aaron had exalted themselves about Israel. Moses turned to the LORD to settle the dispute and settle it He did. The earth opened up and Korah, Dathan, and Abiram were buried. Fire came out from the LORD and consumed the other 250 men. Those men were important in their own eyes but in the face of the LORD that did not matter at all.]

It is an easy thing to get caught up in what people think.

When people are happy with us we can be satisfied with that.

When people have a low opinion of us we can easily be overcome by that.

The remedy to both of those problems is to care more about what God thinks than anything else.

Of course people can help us with that.

Fellow believers who love the LORD and know His word can help point us in the right direction and we would be wise to surround ourselves with such people, but other people are only truly helpful to us in as much as they help us look to the LORD.

*Don't you want that?*

Don't you want to be Confident in Christ?

How great would it be to trust Jesus more than anything else?

That starts by getting to know Jesus as He is and that happens through those He chose to establish the church and we have their testimony right here in the Bible.

As we get to know Him and trust Him more it will make us more consistent in our character.

Whether at home, at work, in church, or wherever we find ourselves our lives will reflect the fact that we belong to Jesus.

The more we trust Him the less we will look to the people and things of this earth and the more we will fix our eyes on Him.

How good would it be if we would find more confidence in Christ?

Let's pray toward that end.