Paul asks the Corinthians to not make it necessary for him to be boldly rebuke and correct them the next time he visits Corinth. He warns that those who would question his authority as an apostle would not be challenging his human human strength or authority but the power of God that was working through him. However, he would rather not have to "pull rank" with his authority as an apostle.

Verse 1: Paul begins to plead with the Corinthians on the basis of being someone who was humble in person but bold when writing his letters to them. In v. 2 he continues his request that they would not force him to boldly rebuke their disobedience. Paul has already explained that he wrote with boldness because he wanted his in-person visits to be joyful and not sorrowful as a result of the rebukes he would have to make (2 Cor. 2:1-3).

2 But I beseech *you*, that I may not be bold when I am present with that confidence, wherewith I think to be bold against some, which think of us as if we walked according to the flesh.

"But I beseech *[to plead; beg]* ***you*****, that I may not be bold when I am present"** – He pleads with the Corinthians to not make it necessary for him to be bold with rebukes when he returns to Corinth.
"with that confidence, wherewith I think to be bold against some" – Although he hopes it will not be necessary, Paul states that he will indeed be confidently bold toward "some." The "some" were those who were being disobedient to the gospel of Christ and were harboring sin in their lives.
"which think of us as if we walked according to the flesh" – These disobedient people looked at Paul as merely a man having only self-appointed human authority and only fleshly means at his disposal for enforcing that authority. They believed that Paul could do nothing to make them repent and thus were rebelling against his apostolic authority.

3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh:

The Greek word for "war" means "to fight" or it can also mean "to lead men into battle as a commander." Paul was indeed a man and, because he was a man, he "walked" (lived) as a man with human strengths and weaknesses. However, despite being a mere man, Paul (and other Christians) did not have to resort to human means for fighting spiritual battles.

4 (For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)

"For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal *[pertaining to the flesh]***"** – Paul would not be engaging in a battle of human will, intelligence or ability when returned to Corinth. We need to remember that problems within the church are not to be dealt with using primarily human tools because they are spiritual problems.
"but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds" – Strongholds were fortresses where the enemy could hide and be protected. They were used because they were extremely difficult for their adversaries to penetrate and defeat. Satan, the world, and even rebellious Christians often hide within such strongholds in an attempt to resist the will of God. Nevertheless, God provides us with spiritual weapons so that we can destroy these influences within the church and our lives.

5 Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; 6 And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

"Casting down imaginations *[reasonings]***, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God"** – Satan and the world will use human reasoning to try to discredit the things of God. People will place themselves in a position of judging God and His motives. They may say things such as "their God" would never send people to hell. Atheists often accuse the God of being unloving or a tyrant because of all the acts of judgment found in the Bible. However, such challenges to God are not intellectual but spiritual in nature and He provides us with the spiritual weapons for defeating them.
"and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" – Just as Jesus was able to show the folly of the scribes and Pharisee's disputes over His teachings, the Holy Spirit is able to show the superiority of God's wisdom over the wisdom of man and Satan. Only those who have rejected God to the point that He has turned them over to a reprobate mind will remain blind to the truth (**Rom. 1:21-22, 28** *"Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools...And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient"*).
"And having in a readiness to revenge *[avenge; punish]* **all disobedience"** – This spiritual weaponry is also to be used to correct and punish those who disobey God's word and are unrepentant, as in the case of the man in the Corinthian church who was having an incestuous relationship with his father's wife (1 Cor. 5:1-13).
"when your obedience is fulfilled" – Paul seems to be allowing time for the Corinthians to complete their obedience to his command for them to purge the sin from the church. He does not want it to be necessary to use the spiritual weapons he has been describing against the Corinthians.

7 Do ye look on things after the outward appearance? If any man trust to himself that he is Christ's, let him of himself think this again, that, as he *is* Christ's, even so *are* we Christ's.

"Do ye look on things after the outward appearance?" – Apparently Paul was not an imposing figure, nor was he impressive as far as human ability goes (v. 10). There are many people who are able to get people to follow them because they are impressive in speaking or personal ability. However, Paul is warning the Corinthians to not evaluate people by their physical appearance or human ability because that is not a true measure of a person's spiritual nature. False apostles had come into the Corinthian church and were criticizing Paul's physical appearance and abilities in order to get followers for themselves.
"If any man trust to himself that he is Christ's, let him of himself think this again" – These false apostles were confident (or put on a front of confidence) that they belonged to Christ, placing themselves in a position to judge Paul and his ministry. However, Paul says that they needed to reconsider their criticisms.
"that, as he *is* Christ's, even so *are* we Christ's" – If these false apostles can claim to belong to Christ, so can Paul and his ministry companions. They have no basis for their claim of superiority over Paul. In truth, Paul had been called by Christ Himself (Acts 9:1-20) but all the Corinthians had to go on was Paul's testimony.

8 For though I should boast somewhat more of our authority, which the Lord hath given us for edification, and not for your destruction, I should not be ashamed:

"For though I should boast somewhat more of our authority" – Paul is reluctantly resorting to emphasizing his apostolic authority even though he doesn't want to (**2 Cor. 12:11** *"I am become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me: for I ought to have been commended of you: for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing"*). However, he feels like he must in order to prevent the Corinthians from following false apostles and their heretical teachings.
"which the Lord hath given us for <u>edification</u> *[to build up]*, and not for your destruction" – God had not given Paul his authority as an apostle in order to harm or destroy the Corinthians. The purpose of Paul's authority was to lead the Corinthians to the truth and keep them on the correct path. It was these false apostles who were claiming their own authority in order to take advantage of the Corinthians.
"I should not be ashamed" – Paul is not ashamed to use his authority for the spiritual benefit of the Corinthians. Any boasting of his authority was not for his own benefit but to help the Corinthians grow in their faith.

9 That I may not seem as if I would terrify you by letters. 10 For *his* letters, say they, *are* weighty and powerful; but *his* bodily presence *is* weak, and *his* speech contemptible.

"That I may not seem as if I would terrify you by letters" – Paul had written some severe rebukes in his previous letters to the Corinthians and the false apostles had accused him of trying to intimidate the Corinthians into obeying him through the letters. However, Paul states that his goal was not to terrify them. His true intention was to lead them to repentance (**2 Cor. 7:9** *"Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing"*).
"For *his* letters, say they, *are* weighty and powerful" – Paul states what the false apostles were claiming - that Paul was expressing a power and authority in his letters that he didn't truly possess.
"but *his* bodily presence *is* weak, and *his* speech <u>contemptible</u> *[of no value; not worthy of respect]*" – These false apostles claimed that when Paul was there in person that he was totally different than what his letters portrayed. Instead of the bold lion that he was in the letters, they claimed that in person Paul was a weak leader unworthy of being followed.

11 Let such an one think this, that, such as we are in word by letters when we are absent, such *will we be* also in deed when we are present.

Paul urges those who think this of him to reconsider their expectations of him. He states that he will be just as bold in person as he was in the letters that he wrote.

12 For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.

"For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves" – These false apostles spent a lot of time claiming their spiritual superiority in an attempt to get people to follow them. However, Paul and his ministry companions did not want to be grouped together with these false apostles by bragging on themselves. He also didn't want to judge his spiritual authority by comparing himself to the false apostles.
"but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise" – Comparing oneself with other people is not the way to measure your spirituality. The true measure of a man's spirituality is whether or not he is obedient and pleasing to God. Jesus Christ and the word of God is the yardstick by which we are to measure ourselves (**v. 18** *"For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth"*).

Verses 13-18: Paul states that he and his ministry companions would only boast in the things that God has empowered them to do, which included bringing the gospel to the Corinthians and to others that have not yet heard it. However, any boasting or glorying that they did would be in the Lord, because it is His approval that matters and not the approval of man or self.