

# 2 Corinthians 10:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

That I may not seem as if I would terrify you by letters.

## Analysis

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**That I may not seem as if I would terrify you by letters** (ἴνα μὴ δόξω ὡς ἀν ἐκφοβεῖν ὑμᾶς διὰ τῶν ἐπιστολῶν)—Ekphobein (ἐκφοβεῖν, "to frighten/terrify") suggests his opponents accused Paul of using harsh letters to intimidate from a safe distance. Paul's "severe letter" (2:3-4, 7:8-12) had caused grief but produced godly repentance. He now defends this—not terrorizing but exercising legitimate apostolic authority to protect the congregation from destructive false teaching.

This verse anticipates the critique in verse 10: Paul's letters are "weighty and powerful" but his presence weak. Paul doesn't deny the charge but reframes it: his letters reflect genuine authority, which will be equally evident in person when necessary. He isn't a coward hiding behind correspondence—he's a patient shepherd giving space for repentance before confronting face-to-face.

## Historical Context

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Letter-writing was a recognized form of authority in the ancient world. Absent leaders governed through correspondence. Paul's extensive letter-writing ministry (13 canonical epistles) exercised apostolic oversight across multiple congregations. His opponents attempted to delegitimize this by contrasting impressive letters with unimpressive personal presence.

## Related Passages

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**Romans 10:9** — Confession and belief for salvation

## Study Questions

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1. When is confronting sin through writing (letters, emails, texts) appropriate, and when does it become cowardly avoidance of face-to-face accountability?
2. How do you respond when corrective words—whether written or spoken—are dismissed as attempts to 'terrify' rather than received as loving discipline?
3. What does Paul's willingness to cause 'godly grief' (7:9-10) teach about the place of discomfort in spiritual growth?

## Interlinear Text

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ἵνα	μὴ	δόξω	ώς	αν	ἐκφοβεῖν	ὑμᾶς	διὰ	τῶν
<b>That</b>	G3361	<b>I may</b>	as	if	<b>I would terrify</b>	<b>you</b>	<b>by</b>	G3588
G2443		G1380	G5613	G302	G1629	G5209	G1223	

ἐπιστολῶν.

**letters**

G1992