

# Corinthian Slander

*2 Corinthians 10:9-12*



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- There is no reliable description of the stature and looks of the Apostle Paul, although some ancient documents speculate about it. There is a description from a book that is not in the New Testament: The Acts of Paul and Thecla have a portraiture thus: "Baldheaded, bowlegged, strongly built, a man small in size, with meeting eyebrows, with a rather large nose, full of grace, for at times he looked like a man and at times he had the face of an angel," and Ramsay (Church in the Roman Empire, 32) adds: "This plain and unflattering account of the apostle's personal appearance seems to embody a very early tradition," and in chapter xvi he argues that this story goes back to a document of the 1st century.
- In some respects it harmonizes with what we gather from Paul's Epistles. Findlay (HDB) notes that this description is confirmed by "the lifelike and unconventional figure of the Roman ivory diptych, 'supposed to date not later than the 4th century.' " (Lewin's Life and Epistles of Paul, Frontispiece, and II, 211). At Lystra the natives took Barnabas for Jupiter and Paul for Hermes, "because he was the chief speaker" (Ac 14:12), showing that Barnabas had the more impressive appearance, while Paul was his spokesman.

- 1Co 1:17 For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not in cleverness of speech, so that the cross of Christ would not be made void.
- 1Co 2:1-5 And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. 2 For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. 3 I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling, 4 and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, 5 so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.

- **They say** (πασιν). Reading of B old Latin Vulgate, but Westcott and Hort prefer πησιν (says one, the leader). This charge Paul quotes directly. **Weighty and strong** (βαρεια και ισχυραι). These adjectives can be uncomplimentary and mean "severe and violent" instead of "impressive and vigorous." The adjectives bear either sense. **His bodily presence** (η παρουσια του σωματος). This certainly is uncomplimentary. "The presence of his body." It seems clear that Paul did not have a commanding appearance like that of Barnabas ( Acts 14:12 ). He had some physical defect of the eyes ( Galatians 4:14 ) and a thorn in the flesh ( 2 Corinthians 12:7 ). In the second century *Acts of Paul and Thecla* he is pictured as small, short, bow-legged, with eye-brows knit together, and an aquiline nose. A forgery of the fourth century in the name of Lucian describes Paul as "the bald-headed, hook-nosed Galilean." However that may be, his accusers sneered at his personal appearance as "weak" (ασθενη). **His speech of no account** (ο λογο εξουθενημενο). Perfect passive participle of εξουθενεω, to treat as nothing (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:28 ). The Corinthians (some of them) cared more for the brilliant eloquence of Apollos and did not find Paul a trained rhetorician ( 1 Corinthians 1:17 ; 1 Corinthians 2:1 1 Corinthians 2:4 ; 2 Corinthians 11:6 ). He made different impressions on different people. "Seldom has any one been at once so ardently hated and so passionately loved as St. Paul" (Deissmann, *St. Paul*, p. 70). "At one time he seemed like a man, and at another he seemed like an angel" (*Acts of Paul and Thecla*). He spoke like a god at Lystra ( Acts 14:8-12 ), but Eutychus went to sleep on him ( Acts 20:9 ). Evidently Paul winced under this biting criticism of his looks and speech.

- understanding
- συνίημι
- suniēmi
- 1) to set or bring together
- 1a) in a hostile sense, of combatants
- 2) to put (as it were) the perception with the thing perceived
- 2a) to set or join together in the mind
- 2a1) i.e. to understand: the man of understanding
- 2a2) idiom for: a good and upright man (having the knowledge of those things which pertain to salvation)
- suniēmi: to set together, fig. to understand
- Original Word: συνίημι  
Part of Speech: Verb  
Transliteration: suniēmi  
Phonetic Spelling: (soon-ee'-ay-mee)

Definition: to set together, to understand

Usage: I consider, understand, perceive.

- 4920 *syniēmi* (from 4862 /*sún*, "together with" and *hiēmi*, "put, send") – properly, *put together*, i.e. join facts (ideas) into a *comprehensive* (inter-locking) whole; *synthesize*.
- 4920 /*syniēmi* ("put facts together") means to arrive at a *summary* or final understanding (complete with *life-applications*). Accordingly, 4920 (*syniēmi*) is closely connected with discerning and doing "*the preferred-will of God*" (2307 /*thélēma*).
- Eph 5:17: "So then do not be *foolish* (878 /*áphrōn*), but *understand* (4920 /*syniēmi*) what the *preferred-will* (2307 /*thélēma*) of the Lord is (2307 /*thélēma*)."