

Solid Rock Christian Church Manassas, Virginia

Bible Study - April 27, 2023

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Title: "Winning The Spiritual War"

Scripture Reference: 2 Corinthians 10:1-5

I. Introduction

A. For every true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, we are faced with the reality of spiritual warfare. Sadly, there are some Christians who are not aware of or will not admit this truth, that there is spiritual warfare raging.

B. The tenth chapter of 2 Corinthians is packed full of powerful information and lets us know that we are to be courageous, and because of what God provides for us, we are competent in this battle of spiritual warfare.

C. The Apostle Paul dealt with spiritual warfare in his life and as the battle begins against the forces of wickedness at Corinth, Paul appears in his soldier's uniform to set the example for all to follow.

D. He reveals four traits of a soldier who can triumph in the battle of spiritual warfare: He is **Compassionate**, **Courageous**, **Competent**, and **Calculating**.

E. This study will focus primarily on the second and third traits just mentioned (i.e., courageous, and competent) but I will briefly discuss the first trait (compassion). The fourth trait will be covered in a separate lesson.

II. Exposition [Part I] - A Christian Soldier is Compassionate(V 1)

"Now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of

Christ, who in presence am base among you, but being absent am bold toward you:"

A. Good soldiers take no pleasure in using deadly force and will do so only with great reluctance.

B. While surveying the devastation at the battle of Fredericksburg, Robert E. Lee said soberly, "It is well that war is so terrible - we should grow too fond of it" (James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom, The Oxford History of the United States* [New York: Oxford Univ; 1988] 572).

C. A noble warrior's power is constrained by his compassion and exercised only when there is no other option. That is the spirit in which Paul introduced this forceful section of his epistle.

D. That does not mean that Paul doubted or downplayed the authority delegated to him directly by the sovereign Lord.

E. Before exercising his apostolic authority, Paul first displayed his compassion. He said - "Now I Paul myself beseech (urge) you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ ((for the insubordinate minority to end their rebellion and be reconciled to the truth.))
//This is the context of 2 Corinthians 10:1.//

F. Instead of seeking personal vengeance on his enemies, Paul showed them the same patience that the Lord Jesus Christ had showed him (1 Tim. 1:16).

G. The word **meekness** (Gr. ***Prautes***) is usually translated "gentleness" in the New Testament. It refers to the humble and gentle attitude that results in the patient endurance of offenses. This word ***Prautes*** marks those who are free of anger, hatred, bitterness, and a desire for revenge.

Comment: The word *Prautes* also denotes not weakness, but power under control!

H. The word **gentleness** (Gr, *Epieikeia*) is translated "kindness." When applied to those in authority, it means "leniency" and describes those who graciously refuse to insist on the full measure of their legal rights.

I. No one more perfectly manifested the attitude expressed in meekness and gentleness than Jesus Christ.

J. Paul knew that Christ's character sets the standard for every Christian soldier to follow, since Jesus commanded - "**Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest for your souls.**" (Matt. 11:29).

K. Paul sought to imitate the Lord by patiently holding his power in check. Despite being mistreated by some in the assembly at Corinth, Paul viewed using his rod against them only as a last resort. "What will ye? Shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love, and in the spirit of meekness?" (1 Cor. 4:21).

L. Perversely, Paul's enemies put a negative spin on his compassion, scornfully condemning it as cowardly weakness. They slanderously accused Paul of being meek when face to face with them - "Who in presence am base among you, but being absent am bold toward you:" (v 1).

Comment: The allegation that Paul was bold when absent but weak when present was a clever contrivance.

//Are you seeing or sensing the spiritual warfare that's going on?//

III. Exposition [Part II] - A Christian Soldier is Courageous (V 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."

A. Those who mistook Paul for a weakling were drastically mistaken. When all attempts at compassion were exhausted, Paul would fight fiercely to preserve his integrity for the sake of the truth.

B. The biblical record of Paul's courageous life speak for itself. He faced hostile mobs, beatings, imprisonments, riots, shipwrecks, and plots on his life.

C. Paul without fear proclaimed the gospel before the Jewish Sanhedrin (Acts 23), Roman governors (Acts 24, 25), King Herod Agrippa (Acts 26), even the emperor (acts 25:11; 27:24).

D. Because of his compassionate desire to spare the rebels, Paul called them to repent. If they did, when he was present with them he would not need to **be bold with the confidence he had in his authority**.

E. The word **bold** in Verse 2 means "to become courageous." Paul was pleading with them not to force him to display the confrontive courage of which he was capable.

F. The apostle would wage war, if necessary, "Against some, which think of us as if we walked according to the flesh." V 2c).

IV. Exposition [Part III] - A Christian Soldier Is Competent (Vv 3-5)

A. The battlefields of history are littered with the wreckage of courage, but ill-equipped soldiers. In addition to being compassionate and courageous, the Christian soldier must also be properly armed for the struggle.

B. Paul gave his opponents fair warning that he was armed with "the armour of righteousness" (2 Cor. 6:7) and ready for battle.

C. Paul's statement in 2 Corinthians 10:3 - "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh" is a play on words. In Verse 2, the false teachers had accused Paul of walking in the flesh in a moral sense - of being corrupt and immoral, driven by lust, greed, and pride.

D. Playing off of his opponents' moral use of the term, Paul affirmed that he did walk in the flesh in the physical sense; that is, he was a man. He denied the false charge that he was corrupt (cf. 1:12) but he acknowledged the reality of his humanity.

E. Never-the-less, though Paul walked in the flesh in the physical sense, he did not **war after** (or **according to**) **the flesh**. He was a man, but he did not go to war using human weapons.

Comments:

- 1) All believers are soldiers in the spiritual war against the kingdom of darkness; there are no exemptions or deferrals.
- 2) Our fight is for the truth of Scripture, the honor and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, the salvation of sinners, and the virtue of the saints.

F. In Ephesians 6:12, Paul defined the battle as a "struggle" (i.e., we wrestle), not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

G. A spiritual war cannot be successfully fought with fleshly weapons. Therefore, the weapons in Paul's arsenal were not those of human ingenuity, human ideology, or human methodology.

H. Human reason, wisdom, plans, strategies, organizations, skilled

eloquence, marketing, religious showmanship, philosophical or psychological speculation, ritualism, or mysticism are all ineffective weapons against the darkness and spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

I. None of these things can rescue sinners from the domain of darkness or transform believers into Christ's likeness.

J. To successfully fight the spiritual war requires weapons from the heavenly arsenal. Only those divinely powerful weapons are suited for the pulling down of strong holds (i.e., the enemies' fortresses).

K. A stronghold (i.e., fortress) in extrabiblical Greek referred to a prison. Fleshly weapons cannot successfully assault the formidable stronghold in which sinners have entrenched themselves.

L. Verse 5 - "Casting down imaginations ..." Impotent weapons cannot bring about the destruction of those strongholds (fortresses), which Paul defined specifically as imaginations (Gr. *logismos* = speculations). This is a general word referring to any and all human or demonic thoughts, opinions, reasonings, philosophies, theories, psychologies, perspectives, viewpoints, and religions.

M. The strongholds (fortresses) in view here are not demons, but ideologies. //Please continue to follow along closely.//

Comments:

- 1) The notion that spiritual warfare involves direct confrontation with demons is foreign to Scripture.
- 2) Christians who verbally confront demons waste energy and demonstrate a lack of understanding of the Scriptures

concerning the real war, we are engaged in.

N. The battle is with the false ideologies men and demons propagate so that the world believes them.

O. Paul further defined sinners' strongholds of ideas as "every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God." **There is the key!** Don't miss this - I say again - There is the key!

P. Spiritual warfare is not a battle with demons. It is a battle for the minds of people who are captive to lies that are exalted in opposition to Scripture!

Q. The objective of our warfare, through the power of the Holy Spirit, who can change how people think - "bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

R. The key to being successful in spiritual warfare is becoming proficient at using the sword of the Word of God against the lies people believe.

Points:

- 1) It is impossible to fight error without knowing the truth!
- 2) Just as soldiers train constantly in the use of their weapons, so also must Christian soldiers constantly study, pray, and meditate upon the Scriptures.
- 3) My continuing words of encouragement to you are - "Be a daily Bible reader, praying and asking the Holy Spirit to illuminate your mind. Then, live an obedient life that pleases Almighty God!"

It is once again interactive time. Please complete the biblical passages that follow by filling in the blank spaces. Each passage has been taken from the King James Version of the Holy Bible.

" Finally, my brethren, be _____ in the Lord, and in the _____ of his might. Put on the _____ of God, that ye may be able to _____ against the _____ of the devil."

[Ephesians 6:10-11]

"But let us, who are of the _____, be sober, putting on the _____ of faith and love; and for a _____, the hope of _____."

[1 Thessalonians 5:8]

"Thou therefore endure _____, as a good _____ of Jesus Christ. No man that _____ himself with the affairs of this life; that he may _____ him who hath _____ him to be a _____."

[2 Timothy 2:3-4]

"No _____ that is formed against thee shall _____; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in _____ thou shalt _____. This is the _____ of the servants of the Lord, and their _____ is of me, saith the Lord."

[Isaiah 54:17]

"Let not man _____ you with _____ words: for because of these things cometh the _____ of God upon the children of _____. Be not ye therefore _____ with them."

[Ephesians 5:6-7]

"Beware lest nay man _____ you though _____ and vain _____, after the _____ of men, after the rudiments of the _____, and not after _____."

[Colossians 2:8]

I do trust that you have been blessed through the study of this lesson. May the God of all peace continue to bless and keep you in His care and strengthen you in the power of His might.

In the Master's Service

Pastor Austin