

2 Corinthians 10:1-18

“The Weapons Of Our Warfare”

Ch 10 brings us into the 3rd and final phase of the book of 2nd Corinthians as the book begins now to make its way to a close. However there's still plenty of powerful information and application to be found in these final few Ch's. But as we get into Ch 10 Paul takes on a different tone, there is a definite switching of gears here, there's no smooth transition he just takes a turn from one topic to another. **and Because of the fact that the switch is so sudden some have thought that Ch's 10-13 was actually another letter that somewhere down through the ages was just sort of appended or attached to the end of what's become Ch 9 of the book of 2nd Cor. I have my doubts with respect to that theory it seems to me that Paul simply saved this subject till the end because it's a difficult subject for him to bring up.** and We all know that smooth transitions for difficult topics often times simply don't exist. How many times have you heard someone say something like, “I don't know how to say this so I'm just going to say it.” and What they're saying is that there's no real tactful way to bring up what they're going to say so they're just going to switch gears and give you the facts. To me that seems to be a bit more of an accurate understanding of what's happening here. **Paul has sought to instruct them on Christian living, on Christian giving, but he can't sign off with out addressing those who've taken some of the Corinthian believers and turned them against himself. Those who've come in and perverted the gospel for personal gain, and so though he's reluctant to do it, doesn't really want to do it, Paul takes the time to defend *not* himself so much as his calling, his platform and position as an apostle.** and He lets them know that he's prepared to deal with those who've come in, taken and twisted the things he's taught them and sought to make disciples (not after the Lord) but after themselves.

and The way they sought to undermine Paul's message was to undermine Paul's person. We've mentioned before that the way you place a question mark on a man's message is to place a question mark on the man. **If I can get you to doubt a man's integrity, or perhaps his legitimacy/authenticity, then it's an easy transition to get you to doubt his position doctrinally. Because if you can't trust the *man*, how can you trust his *message*? and That's what these guys had done, they'd sought to undermine Paul's person, and in so doing they were stripping him of his *position* in the lives of these Corinthian believers.** So he's gone from living, to giving, and now to *guarding* his position authority in their lives.

and Understand that it's not for his sake that he seeks to defend what God has done in his life. He *knows* what God has done in his life; it's for *their* sakes that he's doing what he's doing. Because if he simply turns a blind eye to what's going on there, it'll make for spiritual devastation if not *destruction* in their lives, because they're being deceived. **It would be so much easier to simply say, “You know what, who needs this? There are plenty of people out there who need the gospel I don't have time for this kind of stuff.” But Paul didn't do that, he had the heart of Christ not only for the unsaved, but also for the sheep. and There were some wolves among the flock that needed to be dealt with.**

and Though it was no doubt distressing to Paul at the time, we're kinda glad in a way that these things happened to him because it's because of such things that we have the letters we have.

If those things weren't happening there would've been no need for him to write this particular portion of scripture. But God has taken those things and utilized them as a means to instruct His body throughout the ages. So his burden has become our blessing.

I think many times we don't know what God's doing in our lives, and how often God does things in our lives, not for our benefit, but for someone else's blessing. So that they might be encouraged, or strengthened when they see the way God moved in your life, your resolve to look to Him, to trust in Him and how He brought you through.

Vs1

Now Paul is going to get pretty hardcore regarding the substance of these next few Ch's but he prefaces that all in such a way as to communicate his heart to them in it. He says, "I'm pleading with you by the *meekness* and *gentleness* of Christ." Of course in hearing the words, "meekness and gentleness" with in the context of Christ we're reminded of the words of Jesus when He said, "*Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.*" Matt 11:29 and So we begin to see how words like meekness, gentleness, lowliness and *boldness* can blend so beautifully together because they're all so perfectly displayed in the person of Christ. The person who doesn't understand how "lowliness" or "humility" and "*boldness*" can blend in the same person doesn't know much about the life of Christ. Jesus; of whom it was prophesied, "*He will not quarrel nor cry out, Nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets. A bruised reed He will not break, And smoking flax He will not quench,*" Matt 12:19-20 **Or another way to understand that - He was gentle with people, not harsh, hurtful, or wounding, He was gracious and full of compassion. No matter where you've been or what you've done, you're hurting, broken, bruised, Jesus isn't looking to finish you off. He didn't come to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He wants to bandage the brokenness, work healing in your heart, rekindle a flame in your heart.** He's not going to quench a smoking flax; He wants to minister *to* you, work restoration *in* you. Yet He was incredibly bold toward the self-righteous religious leaders, calling them white washed tombs; looking good outwardly but a defiled, stinking mess inwardly. He called them blind leaders of the blind, the sons of hell (Matt 23). You remember when He came into the city of Jerusalem and found the rulers of the synagogue selling "pre-approved" sacrifices at an exchange rate that was exorbitant? **You would come in with your lamb to sacrifice and the priest would look it over and say, "Well there's a few blemishes on this one and we can't offer that to God; however over here we have a lamb that's been pre-approved that we can sell you."** and **The price would be astronomical, but what are you going to do, you want to do right by God so you're with out a choice.** and So He put together a whip of cords, overthrew the tables of the money changers, and drove them all out with the whip, told them to quit making merchandise of the people of God. So never confuse "meekness" with "weakness" or think that lowliness and boldness can't dwell with in the same person.

We might understand meekness as that quality that allows people to strike out against one's self; I'll turn the other cheek. Jesus took a pummeling personally *for* us, but He comes to the ready defense *of* us. You want to hurt me that's one thing. But when you go messing with the body of Christ, my brother or my sister I'm going to have a problem.

Meekness doesn't think of self, but it does defend of others. and So they could say what they wanted about Paul, but now they're harming and bringing deceitful doctrine into the body and so Paul is going to deal with it.

and Paul begins to dip into the accusation even here when he speaks of being lowly among them but bold in his letters. **There were people (not understanding the humility of Christ in him when he ministered among them) who said, "Paul is all bark and no bite, he's so bold when he writes, but when he's here he's a pushover, a wimpy little guy who won't stand up." and So Paul is looking to correct that misguided notion here, notice.**

Vs 2

You see he's like, "I don't want to do this, but I'm being backed into a corner here and I have no choice." So he says that when he comes they'll see the consistency of boldness in his pen and in his person if that's what they want, but he doesn't want it to be that way. and Notice that he says that he's going to do what he needs to do with regard to *some*. **Not every one in the church had a problem with Paul, but there were those who had turned on him and he was going to deal with them. Church discipline is a very real thing, but even in that the hope isn't to ultimately harm someone, but to help them. To see them come to their senses with regard to the sin in their lives and repent. But there were those who were actually accusing Paul of walking according to the flesh.**

You know time has a way of sort of "super spiritualizing" certain people. We think of Paul and we can't help but imagine him as a guy who was simply a cut above everyone else. and To an extent he was an incredible human being there's no getting around that. But in *his day* not everyone was a big fan of his, there were people who quite frankly didn't like him, didn't agree with him, didn't like the way he did things. **Said that he walked according to the flesh, didn't do things God's way, and sometimes those people were legitimately confused, other times people said things simply to spite him, to draw people away from him and make disciples after themselves. and So they'd coerce people, manipulate them, seeking to do damage to Paul and to his ministry through the things they said about him.** and I wish it weren't that way but so often that's how people are. They're not content with simply not liking you, they've got to spread lies about you so as to get other people not to like you and simultaneously build up their own fan base so that people will follow after their agenda. and That's the kind of thing that Paul was dealing with here; and so Paul says.

Vs3-6

Which is to say that he's going to give them some time to consider which side of the fence they really want to stand on and then he's coming. and I like that because he's allowing time for repentance to take place after this initial confrontation. He's being patient and allowing the net effect of the Word to sink in and then he'll handle the non-repentant when he gets there. Often times we're simply quick to drop the hammer, we see a sin situation and it's judge/jury and hangman before the trial ever starts. Paul wasn't like that, he gave people some time to respond and repent. Now it wasn't open ended or uncertain, there was a definite point whereby if there was no repentance the hammer was going to fall. But he was always giving people the benefit of the doubt and looking to see the fruits of repentance prior to church discipline.

Now back in Vs 3 Paul makes a couple of statements that distinguish the way the life of the believer is lived. He's being accused of walking according to the flesh (that is being given over to the sinful tendencies of the body; be it lies, manipulative techniques, whatever). and So in Vs 3 he begins to respond to that and he says that as believers we *walk in* the flesh, but we don't *war* according *to* the flesh. Remember when Jesus spoke of we as believers being *in* the world but we're not *of* the world. In other words we're in the world, but the world isn't to be in us. Same type comment here, we live *in* the flesh. We're physically in bodies of flesh. Paul says, "Yes, we're in the flesh in the sense that every person who's every drawn breath on the top side of this planet is in the flesh, we're in frail bodies that are subject to weakness, breakdown, sickness, sin and temptation. *But* we don't war according *to* the flesh." **That is we don't engage in this battle that God has called us to as believers by the various scheming and deceitful tactics of the flesh.**

Why? Because we don't wrestle flesh and blood, we're not engaged in a physical war, but in a spiritual war, and you can't use fleshly tactics to fight a spiritual war. Even though often times it seems to us as though our problem is present in the form of another person, that's really not true. That person is like a symptom, you go to the doctor because you've lost a lot of weight, you're tired all the time and you're loosing color. **He's not just going to put you on weight gain products and call it good. Because odds are you may have cancer, those things are only symptomatic of a much deeper issue. Well it's true that people will confront us or be problematic to us as believers but that's symptomatic of a deeper issue, the enemy is at work. and That's not a flesh and blood battleground, it's a spiritual battleground. and So we don't wage war as believers on a fleshly level.**

Now when Paul speaks of not warring according to the flesh, he's not saying he's a pacifist or that he's against physical war. He's not speaking of weapons like swords, or spears, or modern physical weaponry when he says, "We don't war according to the flesh." We've got to keep the context. He's saying that these people in Corinth were using fleshly tactics to try and manipulate the people to turn from him and follow them but he's saying, "We don't do that. We don't resort to carnal tactics to fight the fight God has called us to." **People want to lie, manipulate, coerce and deceive they'll answer to God for that, but we're not going to respond in like manner. The weapons of our warfare are mighty in God and they're used to pull down strongholds, cast down arguments, or any other area of pride that exalts itself against the knowledge of God.**

Well what are the weapons of our warfare? Paul doesn't mention any of them here. However he lists a whole outfit of them for us in Eph Ch 6. and It's there that we learn of the things God has supplied for us to fight the good fight. He's given us the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shoes of the gospel, the helmet of salvation, the shield of faith, the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God, and prayer. **Now it takes faith to exercise and wield these weapons. It's easy to rely on manipulation rather than simply be centered on and belted about with truth. It's more appealing to people fight with what the world considers to be an image of success rather than being buffered by the breastplate of righteousness. Or to use smooth words, and eloquent articulation as opposed to the straightforward message of Jesus Christ and Him crucified.**

To put on like you're all that and a bag of chips, cause people to perceive you as a powerful person rather than uphold the shield of faith and let the Lord have His way in your life. Rather than use the sword of the Spirit, teaching and preaching the whole counsel of the Word of God, we'll use worldly techniques to draw a big crowd, various schemes and programs. You see there are ways of the world/of the flesh, and then there are the ways of the Word, of the Spirit. and You can not fight a spiritual battle with worldly ways. **Now the world scorns you for the weapons you wield, but the enemy shuns you, he can't stand it when you wield wisely the weapons God has placed in your arsenal. Because he can't stand up against them, he's all about you using coercion, lies, scheming plans and worldly reasoning. But you start exercising things like, faith, righteousness, truth, prayer, and God's Word; he can't effectively combat those things.**

They pull down strongholds, cast down arguments. What are the strongholds he's referencing? He's talking about wrong thoughts, misperceptions, ideas that contradict the true knowledge and nature of God. **and It's amazing how much of a stronghold worldly reasoning and thought patterns can become. It burrows roots down deep in our mind, effects the full gambit of how we lead our lives. But the weapons of our warfare are able to breakthrough those things.**

They're able to cast down arguments, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God. It's amazing how many people want to "debate" with God, they think they've got a better wrap on it, have a better way of seeing and doing things. **Their ways are smarter, more sophisticated than God's. Carnal minds, worldly minds think they know more than God does. and Paul isn't bashing the intellect here, but he is taking sides against intellectualism.** *"There is no wisdom or understanding Or counsel against the Lord."* Prov 21:30 Remember when Job was crying out for about 30 Ch's about how he got a raw deal and had done nothing to deserve it and God owed him an explanation and he knew how things should be and the way the ball was bouncing wasn't it? and He was questioning God's ways, His fairness and all of that. Then out of the whirlwind God showed up; and He said, *"Who is this who darkens counsel By words without knowledge? Now prepare yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer Me."* Job 38:2-3 **and Then He commenced to ask Job a series of 77 questions none of which he could answer. "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth, who determined it's measurements, who stretched the line upon it or to what were it's foundations fastened?" and On and on He went asking questions which couldn't be answered through the wisdom of man. There is no wisdom or understanding, or counsel against the Lord, the wisdom of man darkens counsel by words with out knowledge. Or to understand that another way, the carnal man doesn't know what he's talking about when it comes to the ways and word, or wisdom of God. and The Word of God properly executed casts down those arguments, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God.**

and I'd like to tell you that these strongholds only exist in the hearts and minds of the world, but Paul is writing to the church. There are all kinds of Christians today that hang on to a worldly mindset, using manipulative techniques, smooth words, and various schemes to accomplish their agenda rather than trusting in the Lord with all their heart, leaning not on their own understanding but utilizing the weapons of our warfare in the Spirit so as to allow the Lord to direct their paths.

The waging of the war begins in the mind (notice that), we start thinking about something. What needs to happen, or the way it should happen and then the wheels start spinning as to how to make it happen. That's why it's so critical that our thoughts be brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. An unhealthy thought enters into your mind, perhaps how you could manipulate a situation to your favor, or perhaps a lustful thought or something. As a believer you don't wake up one morning and think, "I think I'll engage in fornication or adultery today if I get the chance." Before the act ever presents itself as an opportunity it began as a thought, then you entertained the thought, tried to think of ways you could find yourself in a convenient position of compromise and the wheels were spinning. But you don't have to entertain unhealthy thoughts; Christ has set you free from the bondage of sin. and We're not to be conformed to this world, but *transformed by the renewing of our mind*. Because the battle begins in the mind, we've got to take those thoughts captive by the grace of God, the power of the Holy Spirit and subject them to the obedience of Christ. In Christ we're not the helpless victims of our thoughts, you can choose to stop it. Be they thoughts of anger, bitterness, lust, fear, greed, covetousness or whatever. "Every thought" means "every thought" we don't have to entertain them, we're to crucify them, subject our thoughts to the obedience of Christ. He's equipped us with weapons that are mighty in God, so that we might pull down those strongholds, and take those thought patterns captive, into the obedience of Christ.

So Paul isn't going to come at them the way they came at him. He'll use truth, righteousness, faith, God's Word, and prayer. Not lies, manipulation, deception or exploitation.
Vs7

Paul is pointing out what these troublemakers are resting a lot of their case on. "Just look at him, he calls himself an apostle? He's a laboring little tentmaker. He's nothing, is that what an 'apostle' looks like, I don't think so." Tradition holds Paul to be a short bald-headed man with a hooked nose, bow legged, the uni-brow and a thick curly beard with eyes that were always oozing. Or to understand it another way he wasn't really a sight for sore eyes, he wasn't what we'd refer to as "eye candy" by any stretch of the imagination. But he's like, "I'm sure, what's an apostle look like exactly? You're going to judge me based upon my appearance?" As you look at the Greek culture (all the statues and all) it's pretty obvious that they were ate up with appearance. But Paul says, "You need to consider this in your own self" in other words, "Not all of you fit the 'Fabio' profile yourselves." I mean, what's a pastor supposed to look like? What's a Christian supposed to look like; those kinds of questions are ludicrous. God searches the heart, He doesn't look at the outward appearance, He's looking to your heart. No body likes to be judged according to appearance. Paul may not have an effulgent glow about him (or whatever they think an apostle is supposed to look like, but he's Christ's nonetheless).
Vs8-11

Paul was not one to be messed with. This is the guy who when a certain sorcerer sought to with stand him on the island of Paphos when the proconsul was wanting to hear from him. and Paul looked him in the eye and said, "You full of deceit and all fraud, you son of the devil and enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease perverting the straight ways of the Lord? The hand of the Lord is upon you and you shall be blind, not seeing the sun for a time."

Immediately the guy was blinded, you didn't want to call Paul's bluff, "He's all bark and no bite." Paul says, "Ok, I'm locked and loaded and headed your way, be careful what you ask for because you're gonna get it."

But notice God's purpose of establishing authority in our lives (Vs 8). It's for edification, not destruction, it's to build up the body, not tear it down. Paul was trying to build them up; these guys were tearing down, destroying the work of Christ. A godly leader is given to you to build you up, now there may be a tearing down of worldliness prior to a building up of godliness, but ultimately the aim is to build up, not tear down.

Vs12

You see whoever it was who was troubling Paul they apparently thought pretty highly of themselves and made that known. They had a little clique that they ran in, and they all hit the standards that they'd set for themselves and so they considered themselves in a class of their own. Paul is saying, "You certainly are, because I'm not going to dare class myself with those who commend themselves, compare themselves among themselves, because people who compare themselves among themselves aren't wise." We're all in the same club so we feel pretty good about ourselves, that's foolish. We don't measure ministry, or our own spirituality by comparing ourselves among ourselves. Because if you were to compare yourself to me, you'd feel immediately as though there was no hope for you...;0) You might feel pretty good about yourself by comparing yourself to me. But I'm not your standard, humanity isn't the standard of comparison. The standard we're measured up against is Jesus Christ (absolute perfection) and by that standard we all fall radically short. (Jhn 16:8-10, sin = Jesus paid for it, the only sin that can condemn a man is unbelief in Christ (and this is condemnation), because He's paid for all sin, so not believing in Him is the only 1 that condemn you, righteousness because I go to the Father = when Jesus ascended it demonstrated the righteousness that God would accept into Heaven, Christ is the standard.)

When I see my life in the light of Christ's righteousness I realize my need for a Savior, when I look to someone else I might feel like I measure up pretty good, it's not wise because Christ is the measure. and If I get to feeling pretty good about my own stance I won't sense my need for Christ. You see it's dangerous, foolish, not wise. We're not to compare ministries either, that person has a church of 3,000, I minister in a church 300, or 30, as though that's the bar of success. We're to be faithful to the Lord, not worry about what He's doing in someone else's life, we don't compare ourselves among ourselves, not wise.

Vs13-16

Notice Paul recognized that he didn't have unlimited authority in the church, he had a "sphere of authority" which God appointed. But that sphere included the Corinthians, God used him to establish that church, not those other guys. But understand that all godly authority has its limits (except for the authority of God Himself, He has all authority) to others He appoints a certain "sphere" of authority. and It's important for the authority to realize that, and its important for those under authority to recognize that they are under a certain sphere of authority. The Corinthians were challenging the God given authority over them, Paul wasn't "lording" over them, there's a difference, but he was an authority over them. and As they grew and were reaching out to others, by extension his sphere of authority would be extended.

But he says, “We’re not going to boast in another man’s sphere of accomplishment.” Those guys had come in and tried to nose in on what God was doing through the apostle Paul. Now it’s not always wrong to operate within the sphere of what God’s done through another man. Not every city is an un-reached city, it’s common to enter in to another man’s labor. **Some plant, some water, God gives the increase; however the agenda, the motive for moving in is critical. I’m not to move in, tear that guy down and take over. We just continue to point people to the Lord, build on the foundation of Jesus Christ watering them, rooting them, feeding the sheep. But that wasn’t what was happening here at all.** They were tearing Paul apart, so as to build themselves up and have their own fan club. We’re not to boast in ourselves, make someone else look bad so as to make ourselves look good, it’s not about us, it’s about the Lord. **Vs17-18**

You see it doesn’t matter how I present myself, my image, how I want you to perceive me, none of that matters. It’s not the one who commends himself who’s approved, but the one who the *Lord* commends who is approved. **If anything self-commendation should be seen as a mark of disqualification. We’re not to be glorying in ourselves, or what we’ve done for Jesus, we’re to glory in the Lord. To God be the glory, great things He has done.**

Prayer Points:

Lord help us to avoid the trap of glorying in self, or in the works of man. It’s not about what we do, it’s about what You’ve *done* in the person of Your Son. So help us to stay sober-minded with regard to who *You* are, and who *we’re not*, not comparing ourselves amongst ourselves so that we might feel better about our own faults and failures. But rather that we’d turn to You, *look* to You, rejoice in Your grace and in Your mercy toward our lives, when we consider ourselves Lord we magnify Your grace, and glorify Your name. Father Thank You that You’ve equipped us in order that we might not find ourselves in the pitfalls of the flesh, but that weapons of our warfare are mighty in You, that we *through You* might walk in victory.

If you’ve been living your life on a false sense of security not realizing that the righteous standard of acceptance before God wasn’t found in being a pretty good person, a genuinely nice guy/gal, compared to so many your morals are better and so you thought you were ok with God. Or perhaps the Holy Spirit is convicting you on another level, but you’ve not responded to the free gift of life in Christ Jesus. If God is knocking on the door of your heart, then today if you’re willing to open it, God will forgive your sin making you whiter than snow, making you a new creation in Christ Jesus. Why put it off another day, simply surrender to Jesus.