

January 7, 2024, Pastor Jason Smotherman

SERMON NOTES:

The Weapons of our Warfare - Faith

2 Corinthians 10:3-7

For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For **the weapons of our warfare** are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete. Look at what is before your eyes. If anyone is confident that he is Christ's, let him remind himself that just as he is Christ's, so also are we.

Paul was in defense mode.

Yes that Paul.

Saul who became Paul.

The author of almost 2/3 of the NT.

The one who claimed he spoke in tongues more than everyone. He found himself with adversity and resistance not from the enemy, but fellow believers.

He addressed it, confronted it, because **his mission of building up the body would involve tearing down everything (thoughts and philosophies) that exalted itself above the TRUTH's of the Kingdom.**

Building and advancement of the Kingdom faces challenges and battles from everywhere. **The greatest and most important battles are the ones we face within.**

Truth is, if you endeavor to be part of the advancing Kingdom of God, resistance will be a part of it. Most of the resistance will be from Carnal Christians, including the carnality that is in you. I don't want to be a carnal Christian. I want to be a person of the Spirit.

A Spiritual truth is at work. **No forward motion goes untested.**

Nor should it. Victories shouldn't be easy or cheap. **Ground taken without the ability to keep it is spiritual motion.** It will make you look good but you will never see any movement. The goal has to be movement. Motion without movement is Religion.

Here is the good news:

The resistance that the enemy brings, that wars against you will actually strengthen you to complete the task. **The strength you gain will allow you to not just win the battle but keep the victory.** In the end, the enemy and even our own flesh can be used by God for the destroying of strongholds. We are to be people of the Spirit.

There is, without a doubt, a resistance to Kingdom movement not just from the enemy but **directly from the side of each of us that is CARNAL and of the FLESH.**

Let's define Carnality

Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary (p. 270)

CARNAL - Anything related to the fleshly or worldly appetites and desires rather than to the godly and spiritual desires. Basic human nature is carnal, sold out to sin and thus living in the realm of death, unable to observe God's spiritual law (Rom. 7:14). People walk either in the flesh or in the Spirit, leading to death or to life. **The carnal person is hostile to God, unable to please God** (Rom. 8:1-11).

Even church members can be carnal, being only babes in Christ, as Paul indicated in writing to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 3:1-4). Such Christians are jealous of one another and quarrel with one another. Christians should solve their problems with different "weapons" (2 Cor. 10:4). Such weapons serve God's purposes, destroy human arguments and human divisions, and bring glory to Christ.

Romans 8:5-8

For to be carnally minded *is* death, but to be spiritually minded *is* life and peace. Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

Paul was facing attacks that were carnal in nature.

They were reasoned, actually had validity. Their basis though, was rooted in human philosophy and understanding.

Let's look at 5 of the attacks that were being levied against him.

- He was a "keyboard" warrior. He was only brave when he was writing letters but cowardly in face to face situations (2 Corinthians 10:1, 9-10). Little did they know the words he was writing were not just for them but believers for the ages to come. They saw a lack of connection, Paul saw connection through ages to come. He was confrontative in a way that would cause movement not just motion. **He is not just the God of the spoken but also the be quiet.**
- He was seemingly content to do it without support. People were saying that his refusal to accept support was a sign he was inferior, not a good leader (2 Cor. 12:13-16)
- There was an inference that Paul didn't portray that kind of authority he claimed to have (2 Cor. 10:7)



- He was struggling with in person communication. 2 Cor. 11:6, he readily admits how unskilled he was in person communication, but his authority didn't come from talent and gifting **but position in Christ and obedience to mission.**
- There was a charge against how his boasting was unbecoming of an apostle (2 Cor. 10:8).

In responding to these criticisms.
Paul wrote the following.

2 Corinthians 10:3-7

For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For **the weapons of our warfare** are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete. Look at what is before your eyes. If anyone is confident that he is Christ's, let him remind himself that just as he is Christ's, so also are we.

Paul was essentially saying: You are trying to win a spiritual war with a natural mindset. You may actually gain a crowd. You may actually have money in the bank. You may actually look holy and important. You will have a form, but the power you will not have. As a believer be more interested in your identity and position in Christ and your obedience to do what he has called you to do than looking the part.

You need to unleash the weapons of warfare that are mighty and from the Spirit.

I fear that the most accepted and believed sermons that would preached today would be:

- 15 reasons why God won't heal you.
- 3 reasons why you will always be stuck.
- You are meant to live broke and unhappy.
- Your marriage needs help, o well.
- You kids are destined for disaster.

People don't need convincing that life is hard, they need convincing that God is good.

Carnality is readily accepted in the church, when faith should be!

It is the prayer of faith that will save the sick.

It is faith that brings vision.

It is faith that pleases God.

It is faith that advances the Kingdom.



Carnal Christians are convicted about the reasons why it won't happen.

They carry the characteristics of complaining, criticizing, negative pessimistic glass is happy empty Eeyore Christian living. They disguise their lack of faith with "wisdom" and "caution". Of which I was once.

Spirit Filled and Led Christians are convinced that it already has happened. They are on a journey to see what was already given.

They carry the characteristics of optimism, positive confession, glass half full, they possess the "even if" kind of faith that allows God to be God. In the end, faith is more grounded than its characteristics, **it is rooted in the conviction that the promises and destiny that I have been assured of will come to pass in God's timing and plan. All the while being convinced of it. (Hebrews 11:1)**

The moment that FAITH is released, the CARNAL will attack.

What are you going to be? A person of Faith or of the carnal?

The Bible frames this battle as a war between darkness and light.

The origin story

Satan, or Lucifer, was given free will and authority over 1/3 of God's kingdom. Along with Michael and Gabriel, they were like generals over God's Kingdom. Satan allowed pride to rise up and he desired to be like God. God cast him down and the war is being waged. He doesn't wage the war against God, he can't win. He wages the war against God's prized creation. You and I have been entered into this war and the battle over our affection is intense.

Satan's found a secret power to wage the war with - deceit.

He tries to convince God's kids that they are forgotten, the promises aren't for them. He offers alternatives to the real. **This deceit is not just found in the unbeliever but also the believer.**

This darkness is seen in the carnal "darkness" in the world:

- Evolution
- Humanism
- Self seeking
- Pleasure seeking
- Materialism

Here is how powerful the darkness is:

You attain it, and you are more empty than when you started.

You go for it again. Like a rat on a reel, always chasing and never attaining.

Money leads to needing more money. Fame leads to needing more fame. Hurt leads to more hurt.



When this kind of philosophy is found in the church it leads to powerless Christianity. A God who could heal, deliver, free, bless, but chooses not too. Christians believing that we are called to live under, beneath, always addicted, never free, never advancing, and never attaining.

Then it happens....

The men and women who get tired of eating the fruit of this kind of life and go on a search for a better answer to prodigal living.

In the darkness of the world:

They start asking the questions many of us have asked.

Where did I come from? Why am I here? Where am I going? Is this all there is to life?

In the darkness of the church:

Is this all there is in God? Why am I not seeing the book of acts today? Is this all there is to Christianity?

These kind of question can lead to the greatest awakening one can have. A real encounter with God. He sends his presence, the very hand of God reaches out and touches human flesh, not just any but yours.

That's what salvation is - stepping from darkness to light.

Being born again, essentially is an awakening to a new life. In this new life there are new presets, new thoughts, new ways, and LIFE.

Wherever you are at. In the world or in the church. There is an invitation to the faith life.

Back to Paul.

The 5 attacks were addressed at the strongholds found in their own lives not in Paul's.

Paul was exemplifying what it meant to advance the kingdom.

- 1) He properly drew the line in direct communication and also loved them to and desired relationship face to face.
- 2) His ministry couldn't be bought. His sole foundation was Jesus.
- 3) He didn't have to pretend to be someone other than what God created him to be.
- 4) His authority didn't rest in gifts and talents but obedience and position in Christ.
- 5) His boasting was in the Lord.

They were trying to help him become for palatable.

Become a better speaker so people will like you.

Don't boast about your position in Christ, it's making everyone else look bad.

Paul wrote, paraphrased by your pastor, can't stop won't stop.

Churches and believers since the beginning have tried to introduce human reasoning and philosophy to the life of believers as a way to "help" the spirit of God clean up a dirty and wounded soul. The truth is, only one thing can repair the spiritual problem of sin in our lives, the spiritual answer that is Jesus.



Man's philosophy will lead you from one addiction to the other. One cycle to another. Listen to what Paul told his spiritual son Timothy about this war and the weapons he would need.

1 Timothy 1:18-20

This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, having faith and a good conscience, which some having rejected, **concerning the faith** have suffered shipwreck, of whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I delivered to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme

Good warfare requires Faith and a good conscience.

2 Timothy 2:1-7

You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of *this* life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier. And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless **he competes according to the rules**. The hardworking farmer must be first to partake of the crops. Consider what I say, and may the Lord give you understanding in all things.

Good warfare requires endurance.

Good warfare requires separation from entanglements.

Good warfare requires knowing the rules or "truths" of the Kingdom.

1 Samuel 17:45-47

Then David said to the Philistine, "**You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin. But I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts**, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the Lord will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you and take your head from you. And this day I will give the carcasses of the camp of the Philistines to the birds of the air and the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. Then all this assembly shall know that the Lord does not save with sword and spear; for the battle *is* the Lord's, and He will give you into our hands."