

WEAPONS OF OUR WARFARE

2 CORINTHIANS 10:1-6

OUTLINE

Human Attack On Paul By Rebels In The Church At Corinth

Now I, Paul, myself urge you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ — I who am meek when face to face with you, but bold toward you when absent!

I ask that when I am present I may not be bold with the confidence with which I propose to be courageous against some, who regard us as if we walked according to the flesh (1-2).

Rules Of Engagement

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses (3-4).

Spiritual Counterattack On The Insurgents By Paul

(We are) destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and (we are) taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, and we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete (5-6).

OVERVIEW

- (1) accusations are made against Paul (1-2)
- (2) he has engaged his enemies in spiritual warfare to fight against these accusations (3)
- (3) he is using powerful spiritual weapons such as the knowledge of God to destroy accusations or fortifications in the souls of rebellious Christians (4a)
- (4) his objective is to destroy their false arguments (4b-5a)
- (5) victory is destroying their false arguments (strongholds), taking captives or prisoners of war, taking all of their thoughts captive, and persuading them to obey Christ (5b)
- (6) he will punish any insurgents who refuse to obey and continue to fight (6)

SEQUENCE OF THE WARFARE IMAGERY

attack > warfare > weapons > strongholds > counterattack > victory > captives > remaining insurgents

OR

- (1) accusations and attack on Paul
("meek. . . bold," "as if we walked according to the flesh," "speculations and every lofty thing") >
- (2) spiritual warfare ("warfare") >
- (3) divinely powerful offensive spiritual weapons ("weapons") >
- (4) defensive human strongholds ("fortresses") >
- (5) counterattack ("we are destroying") >
- (6) victory ("destruction of fortresses") >
- (7) take captives or prisoners of war ("taking every thought captive") >
- (8) punish remaining insurgents ("punish all disobedience")

NOTES

- Paul's enemies in the church have accused him of meekness when present, boldness when absent, a lack of courage, and carnality (10:1-2)
- this is an attack on Paul's apostolic authority; in the ensuing spiritual battle Paul seeks to maintain his authority over the church; the battle pits human arguments against the knowledge of God
- his enemies are believers—critics in the Church at Corinth
- the context is crucial in interpreting this passage: the spiritual weapon used here, the knowledge of God, is wielded against critical, carnal, rebellious believers in a local church
- *principle*: it may be necessary to use spiritual weapons against fellow believers
- we use God-given weapons in spiritual warfare, not human (lies, slander, intimidation, swords, guns)
- spiritual weapons are empowered by God
- these powerful weapons can destroy strongholds (*ochuromata*) in the minds of men
- *ochuromata* (plural) 'fortifications' refers to the towers and walls surrounding a village such as Bethlaga: "Bacchides. . . assaulted his fortifications (*ochuromasin*) and besieged him for many days" (Josephus, *Antiquities* 13.26-28). A *polis ochura* is a walled city with battlements like Jerusalem (*Apion* 1.197).
- in this passage the fortifications are the strong false arguments (*logismous* "thoughts, speculations") and seemingly noble ideas (*pan hupsoma* "every lofty thing") raised up against the knowledge of God by Paul's opponents
- these fortifications are defenses erected by Paul's enemies to protect themselves from the knowledge of God
- these defenders have sallied forth from behind their fortifications to attack the knowledge of God (cf. *Ant.* 13:26-28)
- the powerful spiritual weapon used by Paul to attack and destroy enemy fortifications is the knowledge of God
- a knowledge of God is in the Word of God, the Sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17)
- note the scope of destruction: "every lofty thing"
- note the scope of victory: "taking every thought captive"
- the objective of attacking fortifications is to destroy them, to take everyone captive, and to leave the combatants defenseless; in the process they see the overwhelming power of God's Word and hopefully will submit to it
- once their mental fortifications are destroyed Paul can take the defenders, the defeated enemies behind the walls, captive and neutralize them because they no longer have any protection
- *aichmalotizo* means "to take captive in war" or "to cause someone to become a prisoner of war" (Louw & Nida)
- in taking captives, every defensive thought that opposed the knowledge of God (accusations, speculations, lofty things) is also taken captive, locked up, imprisoned, removed from circulation, silenced—no longer expressed openly
- this spiritual battle between Paul and the rebels at Corinth is in progress and will soon be over: it will be won
- their accusations, speculations, and lofty ideas are being destroyed—shown to be false to everyone
- a growing number of POWs are seeing the power of God and have a choice to make: to obey or not obey Christ
- as captives they have no safe choice but to submit to their conquerors—Paul and Jesus Christ
- the only sensible option left is to completely obey Christ
- their fortifications will not be rebuilt because they have been shown to be weak and worthless
- *principle*: destroying fortifications does not guarantee obedience to Christ
- insurgents who remain disobedient and continue to resist will all be punished by Paul
- punishment may be public rebuke (1 Tim. 5:20), demonic oppression (1:20), or the sin unto death (1 Cor. 5:5)
- the obedience of the saints in Corinth is incomplete—some are still fighting
- punishment of the remaining rebels is conditioned upon future unity and complete obedience in the Church at Corinth
- spiritual weapons are equally effective against the strongholds of unbelievers (philosophy, religion, false doctrines, theories, evolution, humanism)