

"Paul and His Critics"

Part 2

2 Corinthians 10:1-13:10

Introduction: Tonight in our study of 2 Corinthians we are about to step into a portion of Scripture that is focused upon spiritual warfare. It is the most informative passage dealing with the battle which all believers are engaged in. We will learn in this passage how we are to fight spiritual battles. We will learn in this passage how dangerous it is when people are exposed to false teachings.

We need to start tonight by setting the context for what we are about to step into. Starting in chapter 10 and going through the remainder of the letter Paul deals with his critics. The Corinthian believers had repented of their sins which Paul had addressed but there were still Judaizers rooted within the church. They were doing their best to cast doubt upon Paul's Apostleship and upon his integrity. All of this was with the goal to cast doubt upon his teaching which was the Word of God. This was not a battle between a man and opposition against him. This was a battle over the Truth of the Bible and Paul knew what and who was behind the opposition. Satan and his demonic forces were fueling the Judaizers. This was a spiritual battle and therefore Paul would treat it as spiritual warfare.

Now last week we started into this chapter and we looked at two points concerning Paul's approach to these Judaizers within the church at Corinth.

I. Paul had Compassion

Notice 2 Corinthians 10:1a

Paul approached this situation in the meekness and the gentleness of Jesus Christ. He did not walk into this situation swinging a sword but instead he came with the hopes there would be repentance on the part of those who opposed him at Corinth. In this approach Paul was controlled by the Holy Spirit and for that reason Jesus was seen in him.

Paul wrote this letter and then he would make his journey to Corinth several months later so therefore he was giving them several months to repent.

II. Paul had Courage

Notice 2 Corinthians 10:1b-2

The critics insinuated that Paul was a coward. They said he was humble in person and bold in his letters. He was humble in person because he was controlled by the Holy Spirit. His letters were bold because they were the Word of God. But he was no coward. He did not desire a confrontation but if they did not repent there would be a confrontation. Paul would not be intimidated by the critics nor would he back down. He cared far too much about the church at Corinth as well as all believers. People's eternal destinies were at stake here. If the critics were permitted to gain the upper hand then their message, which was salvation by works, would be proclaimed and people would die in their sins. So Paul would stand in the face of his critics if that was needed. So Paul had COMPASSION and he had COURAGE.

III. Paul had Weapons

Notice 2 Corinthians 10:3

When Paul tells them he walks after the flesh he is referring to the fact that he is human. He is not saying that he is controlled by the flesh for he was controlled by the Holy Spirit. I believe God placed this here for our benefit to let us know that Paul was not supernatural but he was human just like the rest of us. This is important to grasp because as he moves on he is going to speak of the power of his weapons and God wants us to understand that the very same weapons and power are available for you and me also.

Paul was human but he did not war after the flesh. In other words Paul understood that the battle before him was not a physical battle but it was a spiritual; battle.

Ephesians 6:10-12

¹⁰ Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

¹¹ Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

¹² For 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.

Notice 2 Corinthians 10:4a

Paul's weapons were not carnal which means they were not after the flesh. In other words Paul was not going to engage in the battle with human philosophies or with human

reasoning's. If he had to come to Corinth he would not come with the wisdom of men for this was all carnal.

Notice 2 Corinthians 10:4b

Paul would not come in with carnal weapons but he would come with spiritual weapons which would be mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds. In this statement there is much for us to see.

Let me show you how Vines defines the words "**strong holds**".

"a castle, stronghold, fortress..."

Now in order to understand the spiritual battle we need to understand why Paul uses the word for FORTRESS here. Let me show you what Ray Stedman says concerning the FORTRESS:

"That is a word taken out of the military life of the time, and it is used only once in the Scriptures. It describes a castle with its moats, its walls, its turrets and its towers, that is defended by a handful of resolute, determined men. History records that many times a castle like that has held out for weeks and months and years against an attacking force because it was so difficult to dislodge its defenders."

Paul is letting us know here that he was not in a battle with demons or with Satan although both were behind the teaching of the false teachers but the battle was against a FORTRESS. What does he mean by this?

This is a description of the FORTRESS which is built as the result of false teaching. When someone buys into a false teaching they are actually trapped within a FORTRESS. Let me show you the remainder of Vines definition:

"Anything on which one relies. The arguments and reasonings by which a disputant endeavors to fortify his opinion and defend it against his opponent."

These fortresses exist mostly in false religions such as Mormonism, Islam, Hinduism, Jehovah's Witness, Catholicism and all other false religions but they also exist outside of false religions. The fortresses exist in Atheism, Evolutionism and Humanism.

Here in this text we are told these false systems are MIGHTY FORTRESSES. I want to take your mind back to what Stedman said concerning the words STRONG HOLDS/FORTRESS. This was taken from the military life of the time and the reference

was to castles that were able to be shut up so as to block attacks from an outside force. They could remain locked up for years. Now in the process of the siege the people were trapped on the inside and many died on the inside. This is exactly what happens with people who buy into the any false teaching, human philosophies or anything which is taught that is against the Bible. I point this out to help you to see why it is so important to get our young people grounded in the Word of God at an early age. It is so very dangerous to allow your family to be exposed to the false teaching of our day because when it is accepted it becomes a FORTRESS which traps the one who has bought in to the teaching and there are millions who die inside of these FORTRESSES which means if they are not saved they die in their sins.

All of this helps us to understand why it is so difficult to penetrate the mind and the thoughts of someone we know who is involved in a false teaching. When they bought into the false teaching they became a "prisoner" of the FORTRESS.

Notice 2 Corinthians 10:4 again.

The phrase "the pulling down" actually means "to destroy". Reading the verse again helps us to understand that these FORTRESSES can only be penetrated and destroyed with spiritual weapons. They will never be destroyed with human wisdom. But what are the spiritual weapons which Paul refers to here? We will get to that answer in a moment. In the next verse we can see some details concerning the FORTRESSES.

Notice 2 Corinthians 10:5

The word "imagination" here refers to "human reasoning's" which are thoughts and reasoning's which is EXALTED AGAINST THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD. In other words these are teachings that are set in direct contrast to the Word of God. Let me show you how this happens.

Romans 1:18-23

¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;

¹⁹ Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them.

²⁰ For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:

²¹ Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

²² Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,

²³ And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.

People are born with the knowledge of God but when they are exposed to the false teachings of the world they make the decision to suppress the Truth of God's Word and they then buy into the false teaching and when they do they become entrapped in a fortress. If they do not come to know the Truth then the fortress will become their tomb. Let me show you something which is written in the book of Revelation concerning commercial Babylon.

Revelation 18:1-2

And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory.

*² And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the **hold** of every foul spirit, and a **cage** of every unclean and hateful bird.*

Those who make the commercial system become entrapped in the system. It becomes a fortress and many will die in that fortress.

Notice 2 Corinthians 10:5 again.

The words "casting down" mean "TO DESTROY". So the spiritual weapons which Paul is speaking of here are able to bring these teachings and thoughts to their ultimate destruction. In the second half of this verse we are told how these "human reasoning's" are destroyed and that is by bringing them into captivity of the obedience of Jesus Christ.

Now let us pull this together. Paul is telling his critics that if they do not repent then when he arrives he will break out the heavy artillery which is the spiritual weapons. He will not stand with his enemies and reason with them. He will not rely upon human wisdom. He will

come "packing spiritual heat" and they will be in his direct line of fire. Let me show you God's view of human wisdom.

1 Corinthians 1:17-21

¹⁷ For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.

¹⁸ For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.

¹⁹ For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.

²⁰ Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?

²¹ For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.

The wisdom of the world to God is nothing but foolishness.

Now let us get to the main question again, "What are the spiritual weapons which will demolish the fortresses of false teachings?"

I believe the answer is relatively easy to figure out. What is it that will destroy error? The TRUTH! The spiritual weapons which Paul will employ are the SPIRITUAL TRUTHS OF THE WORD OF GOD.

Ephesians 6:11-18

¹¹ Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

¹² For 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.

¹³ Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

¹⁴ Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;

¹⁵ And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

¹⁶ Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

¹⁷ And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:

¹⁸ Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;

The sword of the Spirit is the ONLY weapon which will be effective against the mighty fortresses of false teaching.

Hebrews 4:12

¹² For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Conclusion/Application:

If there is someone you know who is caught up in a fortress of false teaching the ONLY way they can be set free is through hearing the Word of God.

Romans 10:17

¹⁷ So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

This is why Paul recorded the words of Romans 1:

Romans 1:16

¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

The TRUTH and ONLY the TRUTH will set people free from the fortresses of false teachings.

This is also TRUE of believers who get caught up in false teachings. It is the TRUTH of the Word that will demolish the fortress and set them free. There is so much to say here but for the sake of time I want to give you one more thought.

Notice 2 Corinthians 10:5 again.

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2 Corinthians Study #62

We are often exposed to false teachings and the enemy attempts to plant his thoughts and reasoning's in our minds. It is ONLY by the Word of God that these thoughts can be brought into captivity and destroyed. Therefore we need to have our minds filled with the Scriptures.

Psalm 119:11

¹¹ Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.