

Destroying Spiritual Strongholds

2016 Mark Beard

Text: 2 Corinthians 10:3-6 NIV

3 For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. **4** The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. **5** We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. **6** And we will be ready to punish every act of disobedience, once your obedience is complete.

Introduction:

The Apostle Paul's critics were questioning his spiritual authority and had accused him of being "weak" when physically present and "bold" when he was absent and writing to them. He is defending his authority and trying to help them understand spiritual authority is not shown through worldly boasting and intimidation, but through the power of the Holy Spirit. *Likewise, we do not win spiritual battles by the same natural means we use in winning worldly battles.*

Consider the *advantages* our spiritual weapons give us.

I. Our Spiritual Weapons Can Demolish Spiritual Strongholds (vv.3-4).

"For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. **4** The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds."

A. There is a clear difference between natural and spiritual challenges (v.3).

B. Natural battles and spiritual battles require different weapons (v.4).

C. Spiritual weapons provide us with great spiritual power (v.4).

II. Our Weapons Can Demolish Whatever Exalts Its Self Against the Knowledge of God (v.5).

"We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ."

A. Spiritual battles take place in the spiritual realm, so we need a spiritual response.

In Ephesians 6:12, the Apostle Paul explains, “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” NIV

B. We must know our spiritual weapons and how to use them.

Consider these:

1. Use the name of Jesus in prayer

- John 14:14, “You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.”
- Romans 10:13, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”
- Acts 4:12, “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.”

2. Use the Armor of God everyday - (*truth, righteousness, the gospel of peace, faith, salvation, and the sword of the Spirit - the Word*)

- **Ephesians 6:10-18**, “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. 13 Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. 14 Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, 15 and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. 16 In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. 18 And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord’s people.”

III. Our Weapons Enable Us to Take Captive Disobedient Thoughts (v.6).

“And we will be ready to punish every act of disobedience, once your obedience is complete.”

A. Just as worldly armies take captive their enemies to neutralize them, we take captive “disobedient thoughts” for the same purpose.

Hebrews 4:12 (NIV) 12 For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

B. We can bring thoughts into obedience and submission through spiritual power.

Conclusion

Recently *National Geographic* ran an article about the Alaskan bull moose. The males of the species battle for dominance during the fall breeding season, literally going head-to-head with antlers crunching together as they collide. Often the antlers, their only weapon are broken. That ensures defeat. The heftiest moose, with the largest and strongest antlers, triumphs. Therefore, the battle fought in the fall is really won during the summer, when the moose eat continually. The one that consumes the best diet for growing antlers and gaining weight will be the heavyweight in the fight. Those that eat inadequately sport weaker antlers and less bulk. There is a lesson here for us. Spiritual battles await. Satan will choose a season to attack. Will we be victorious, or will we fall? Much depends on what we do now--before the wars begin. The bull-moose principle: Enduring faith, strength, and wisdom for trials are best developed before they're needed.

- Craig Brian Larson.

Study Notes:

Paul's weapons are effective in doing too things. They can, in the first place, *demolish strongholds* (v. 4). *Ochyrrwma* is a military term for a "fortified place" (Heidland 1967b:590; Malherbe 1983:147). The picture is of an army attacking and tearing down the fortified defenses of the enemy. In the ancient world a prosperous city would build not only a stout wall for its security but also, somewhere inside the wall, a fortified tower that could be defended by relatively few soldiers if the walls of the city were breached by an enemy. Once the stronghold was taken, the battle was over (Carson 1984:47). In ancient times this was commonly accomplished through a variety of siege machines, the most common being battering rams, mobile towers, catapults for throwing darts and the ballistae for throwing stones (Stern 1976). The strongholds that Paul's weapons lay siege to are *arguments* and *every pretension* (v. 5). *Logismous* are reasonings that take shape in the mind and are then worked out in life as action (Heidland 1967a:286; Malherbe 1983:147). *Hypsoma epairomenon* ("raised ramparts") are human "pretensions" (NIV) or "arrogances" (JB, TEV, REB, NEB, RSV, NRSV) that have built fortresses with high towers aimed at repelling attacks by *the knowledge of God* (v. 5; Malherbe 1983:147).

Such efforts, however, are to no avail. For Paul's weapons not only can demolish strongholds (v. 4) but can also *take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ* (v. 5). The verb *aichmalwtizw* means "to take a prisoner of war" (Kittel 1964a:195). Paul pictures human thoughts as captured enemy soldiers. Once a city's defenses had been breached and its fortified places destroyed, conquered soldiers were taken in tow as prisoners of war. In the Roman *triumphus*, the prisoners were paraded through the streets of Rome (see commentary on 2:14-16). Paul's objective, however, is not to put human reasonings and pretensions on public display but to take captive every thought for obedience to Christ (v. 5).

What does this mean today? We live at a time when the mind is deemphasized and the needs of the individual elevated--so much so that our generation has been dubbed "the me generation." By contrast, Paul affirms that the mind matters. Indeed, it is so crucial that he focuses all his efforts on taking every thought captive and making it obey Christ. Alister McGrath has written that the future of evangelicalism lies in the forging of rigorous theological foundations and intellectual credibility (1995:18). For this to happen, Christ must reign supreme in our minds.

So, far from being the spiritual wimp that his critics in Corinth make him out to be, Paul has at his disposal a divine arsenal, which he will use on his next visit *to punish every act of disobedience* (v. 6). The term *ekdikeo* means "to take vengeance for" or "punish"

something--the something in this case being *disobedience* (*parakoe*). The noun *parakoe* (literally, "to hear aside") denotes a stubborn unwillingness to hear what is said and to act on it. The Corinthian intruders are primarily in view here--although any lingering dissenters at Corinth are not excluded. Their disobedience is not their unwillingness to bend the knee to Paul's authority but their attempt to subvert the gospel. "I am afraid that . . . your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ," Paul says (11:3).

What the punishment will involve is left unstated. But Paul will be able to carry it out once the Corinthians' obedience is complete. Only with the church as a whole behind him can Paul operate from a position of strength against his critics. But once he has their support, his troops stand at the ready to be deployed (*en hetoimo echontes*--"will be ready").

This is the reason for Paul's tough talk in his letters. By adopting a stern approach, he hopes to avoid acting as the disciplinarian in person--not because he is intimidated by the Corinthians but because he loves them. We always make the effort to avoid causing grief or pain to those we love. In many ways it is easier to bear hurt ourselves than to watch the suffering of someone we care about. Paul was no different. The severe letter he wrote to the church caused him great distress and anguish of heart (2:4). But he wrote it so that when he was next with them, he might be a source of joy (2:1-3) and love (2:4), rather than a cause of pain.

Source: <https://www.biblegateway.com/resources/commentaries/IVP-NT/2Cor/Spiritual-Weaponry>