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## Unconventional Warfare

By Jeff Bedwell on May 4, 2022

**TODAY'S READING:** 2 Corinthians 10

This chapter marks a turning point in 2 Corinthians. A small unrepentant minority of people in the Corinthian church opposed Paul. They judged Paul's ministry to be fleshly. His lack of rhetorical skills, his meek and humble demeanor, his poverty, his working with his hands, the absence of ecstatic experiences and visions, his incessant trials and difficulties (rather than "success") were, to his opponents, incontrovertible evidence that his ministry was of the flesh and not of the Spirit. Sadly, too often these same standards of evaluation are applied in churches in North America today. Paul addresses this unrepentant minority in chapters 10-13 and in this chapter reveals his unconventional warfare.

*"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. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:3–5, ESV).*

Paul stacks up the military imagery to describe this spiritual battlefield. Every fortified city had strongholds, bulwarks that were particularly impregnable. *Strongholds* references the central arguments that fortify his opponents' message. Paul's gospel has *divine power* to demolish impregnable arguments.

The military metaphor expands to destroying high towers and ramparts. Paul's language of destruction here is not merely about winning arguments or debates. As D.A. Carson points out, "He means something far more: his weapons destroy the way people think, demolish their sinful thought patterns, the mental structures by which they live their lives in rebellion against God." Paul is referencing the citadels of sin in our lives—every high thing, every haughty thought, every action that forms a barrier to the knowledge of the living God.

In ancient warfare when strongholds were captured and towers pulled down, the defenders were taken into captivity. Here Paul extends the military language to thoughts— "and take every thought captive to obey Christ" (vs. 5). The word *thought* refers to the mind as the intellectual center of our being. The idea is that Christ and the truth of the gospel takes over and transforms an individual's mental structures, their plans and ideas as they are countered with the truth.

The spiritual warfare you and I fight today is the same. It is an ideological warfare that is fought at the level of the mind. The only way to destroy error that destroys our lives and our societies is with the truth of God's Word. We must continually counter and replace the lies and error of Satan and the world system opposed to God with the transforming truth of God's Word. As

Paul wrote the Ephesians, encouraging them to take up the full armor of God (Ephesians 6:11-18) including the “*the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God*” (Ephesians 6:17, ESV).

Where in your life do you need to replace error with truth? How will you fill your mind with the truth of God’s Word?

**PRAYER:** Father, thank You for the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ and Your Holy Word. Help me see where I have been taken captive by the lies and errors of this world system and help me focus my thoughts on the life-giving Word of God!

**TOMORROW'S READING:** 2 Corinthians 11

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