

WHOSE WEAPONS ARE WE FIGHTING WITH?

2 Corinthians 10:1-6

When people trust Christ, one of the first issues they struggle with is the realization that the church doesn't function like the business world they have become accustomed to.

Sometimes they think it's because church leaders have never been taught HOW they're supposed to "run a business."

As we look at the 3rd section of 2 Corinthians, we'll observe that Paul takes everything the world teaches us about how to lead and turns it on its head.

We're going to see that the church isn't supposed to look like your business.

It's NOT a sign of weakness to lead God's people in a God-powered way.

But it IS different!

Godly leaders are sometimes misunderstood because they don't lead the way people expect them to lead.

Our style of leadership doesn't measure up to the world's standards.

Paul's critics saw his ministry that way; they were focused on his unimpressive persona, 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.

He didn't measure up to their standards of "success."

Something *must* be wrong with his ministry; God couldn't be blessing such failure!

Paul answers his critics, pointing out that they're judging by human standards.

Godly leadership isn't flesh-powered leadership.

Godly leadership is GOD-powered leadership.

It's NOT man's will done man's way.

It's *God's* will done *God's* way.

Sometimes even God's people don't understand the difference.

Paul urges us to lay aside the world's tools and evaluate things from God's perspective, otherwise he will come as a judge.

Using God's methods, Paul is able to be successful in taking every thought captive, and making it obedient to Christ.

2 Corinthians focuses on the joy of serving God in ministry

Three main topics presented:

The privilege of the ministry 1-7

The principles of Christian grace-motivated giving 8-9

The vindication of Paul's ministry 10-13

Defense of Paul's authority, based on autobiographical scenes from his life.

EXPLANATION OF PAUL'S CONDUCT AND MINISTRY 1-7

The letter begins with an explanation of Paul's delay in visiting them and of the ministry to which God has called him.

PREPARATION FOR THE COLLECTION 8-9

Paul appeals to them to give generously to assist their suffering brethren in Judea.

The basic principle for giving is that we should give generously, as God has given to us—GRACE GIVING—NOT *legalistic* giving.

VINDICATION OF PAUL'S MINISTRY 10-13

Concluding section responds to those who attack Paul's ministry as inferior to others.

He demonstrates his divinely-given, apostolic authority.

RESPONSE TO THE CRITICS 10-12:18

EXHORTATION NOT TO FIGHT BY THE FLESH 10:1-6

God's people live **IN** the world.
 But we're not **LIKE** the world.
 We shouldn't *fight* like the world.
 We shouldn't use the world's weapons.

Paul doesn't want to be hard on them. 1-2

Paul knows what people are saying about him.
 Paul's critics think he's weak because he doesn't take hold
 of the reins and lead.
 He's bold in his letters.
 But he's timid when he stands face to face with his
 followers.
 A successful leader would take hold of the reins and
 lead!
 Why doesn't Paul lead effectively—like a good leader
 ought to lead?!!

He prefers to model Christ's attitudes.

Paul's critics accuse him of being timid.

They see humility as weakness—not as God-given fruit of
 the Spirit in His life.
 That was a fundamental perspective of Greek
 culture—humility is weakness.
 In their culture no one respects humility.
 A good leader would never act with humility!
 Paul reminds them that Christ was marked by similar
 character.

Christ is humble and kind.

He wants those attitudes to be evident in him also.
 In Matt. 11, Christ uses the same word they use, to
 describe Himself.
 It's ironic that Paul's critics label this as a liability
 How terrible Paul's like Jesus! What a weak leader!

***Paul would rather be Christlike
 than businesslike.***

Their values are the opposite of Christ's values.
 His Christlike "weakness" is an affirmation
 that he is called and equipped *by God* for this ministry.
 He is a faithful ambassador of Christ.

Paul desires to be humble in his dealings with them.

But Paul isn't afraid to be firm with them when it's necessary.

Christ's meekness didn't get in the way of a firm response when necessary.

Paul can be hard if he needs to be, but it's no fun.

He urges them to resolve the matter so he doesn't have to be hard on them.

Nevertheless he anticipates that he'll have to be bold with some who think we should be leading the world's way and don't think he measures up to their standard of performance.

Paul doesn't live by the flesh.

Paul isn't willing to accept their standard and live by the flesh

—that's the world's way to operate—but NOT God's.

We don't wage war according to the flesh. 3-6

We live in flesh.

Our bodies are made of flesh.

Physically we live in the flesh.

But we don't use fleshly weapons to fight a spiritual war.

We don't fight the way the world fights!

We're not fighting a physical enemy.

If we were, we could use physical weapons.

We don't use the same weapons the world uses.

Paul isn't thinking so much of war weapons, like spears and shields,

He's thinking more of their impressive *logical* weapons, like philosophy, logic, rhetoric, showmanship, splashiness, personal charisma.

We don't use intimidation, group psychology, prestige, power, and other natural strategies to get our way.

We don't use dazzling flourishes of rhetoric to impress and overwhelm those who have a different point of view.

Our weapons sometimes appear weak alongside of the world's weapons.

Since Paul doesn't use the world's weapons, they think he's a weak leader.

Our enemy is a spiritual enemy—following spiritual authorities.

Our traditional fleshly weapons, with which we lash out against those who resist us won't do any good.

We must fight a spiritual enemy with God-empowered weapons.

We use weapons which are empowered by God.

When God is at work through us, His Spirit empowers us, He gives us everything we need to overcome the enemy and his weapons.

While God-empowered weapons may not look like much, they are *powerful*.

They destroy human logic.

God-empowered words are able to demolish impregnable arguments.

They destroy exalted, impressive thoughts raised up to refute the knowledge of God.

God-empowered words destroy the way people think, they demolish the thought patterns people follow in their rebellion against God.

They take every thought captive.

Every thought becomes obedient to Christ
when confronted by God's truth.

He's able to triumph over all of man's logical arguments **and force them to submit before Christ's** revelation of truth.

Our plans and schemes are taken over and transformed by Christ's thoughts. We have the mind of Christ.

His mind transforms our way of thinking and transforms us into His image.

They punish disobedience.

Ultimately Paul brings this truth back to the situation at Corinth.

God is going to have His way.

Those who seek to resist Him will be punished.

In spite of their view that Paul is a weakling who doesn't really DO anything about their problems, Paul wants them to know that he will deal with the troublemakers, once the church responds in submission to God's will.

Paul is convinced that he's able to use God-given weapons to demolish the strongholds men construct to keep God out of their lives, and to respond to the logical arguments used to reject God and deny God's truth.

In the end, God's weapons will accomplish God's will in His church.

Ironside: "The minister of Christ is not sent to preach eloquent sermons with beautiful resounding platitudes, but to give men the truth of God; and the effect of this truth... is intended to bring every thought into subjection to the obedience of Christ, that all human reasoning may come to an end when God speaks, and that there may be absolute subjection to His will."

What principles for our lives does Paul reveal?

Paul is committed to a different kind of warfare.

It's not about fighting our battles our way.

It's about fighting God's battles God's way.

As we submit to God's will, and let His Spirit control our lives, God will use us to accomplish His purposes in His church.

People trust Christ, NOT because of the clever, convincing power of OUR words, but because God's truth has cut down the high towers in their hearts that were once set against the knowledge of God.

People become mature followers of Christ, not because of our convincing arguments, but because they hear GOD's voice and trust Him.

It will never be OUR skills or cleverness that will lead people to God and transform their lives. It will never be OUR efforts—even at their best.

Transforming lives is the result of God-empowered proclamation of the truth.

We must trust HIM to do His work through us.

The Spirit of God takes the Word of God and applies it to people's hearts.

Our warfare is HIS work through us.

It's about GOD!

He does His work His way, through His instruments.