

## Intro

Since the beginning of Feb we have been looking in some of our meetings on the theme of **spiritual warfare**. We started by seeing that we are the **Army of God, a liberating army, not an occupying army**. We then saw that we do have an Enemy, **the devil**, who **prowls like a roaring lion waiting to devour us**. Today we are going to look at part of Paul's second letter to the church in Corinth.

In 1 Corinthians, **Paul spent a lot of time correcting views of this new church**, following reports about the way in which they were doing things.

Since the church in Corinth received the 1<sup>st</sup> letter, some **of them had been critical of Paul** and the way in which he spoke to them.

**Paul now writes the following in 2 Cor 10 explaining his actions.**

### MSG

<sup>1-2</sup>And now a personal but most urgent matter; I write in the gentle but firm spirit of Christ. I hear that I'm being painted as cringing and wishy-washy when I'm with you, but harsh and demanding when at a safe distance writing letters. Please don't force me to take a hard line when I'm present with you. Don't think that I'll hesitate a single minute to stand up to those who say I'm an unprincipled opportunist. Then they'll have to eat their words.

<sup>3-6</sup>The world is unprincipled. It's dog-eat-dog out there! The world doesn't fight fair. But we don't live or fight our battles that way—never have and never will. The tools of our trade aren't for marketing or manipulation, but they are for demolishing that entire massively corrupt culture. We use our powerful God-tools for smashing warped philosophies, tearing down barriers erected against the truth of God, fitting every loose thought and emotion and impulse into the structure of life shaped by Christ.

### NIV

<sup>1</sup>By the meekness and gentleness of Christ, I appeal to you—I, Paul, who am "timid" when face to face with you, but "bold" when away! <sup>2</sup>I beg you that when I come I may not have to be as bold as I expect to be toward some people who think that we live by the standards of this world. <sup>3</sup>For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. <sup>4</sup>The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. <sup>5</sup>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.

### ME

As I was preparing this message I thought, are **there any areas in which I do things the world's way rather than God's way**. Do I ever speak to people knowing my supposed "rights" rather than being gracious?

**In IT – I became much more assertive**, because I knew how people spoke to me. **I wonder did I ever slip into an ungodly way of speaking to people in the name of assertiveness?**

### WE

**"The world is unprincipled. It's dog-eat-dog out there! The world doesn't fight fair".**

Friends today I'd like to spend some time about **how, as Christians we fight conflict in this world**, without **slipping into the world's way of doing things**.

**Now we live in a world that is full of conflict:** husbands and wives, parents and children, bullies at school, countries against countries, constituents and governments and even here in this passage, there was conflict in the church.

We see in the bible, references to the fact that **we are in the world**. We are **not to get involved in the same conflict that the world does**.

But **let's not be naive**, even though we don't fight like the world does, **we still do live lives with conflict**. The passage talks of the **tools of our trade**, other translations say the **"weapons of our warfare"**.

## **So what is the warfare we're to get involved with?**

The **ruler of this world is Satan**, and because of Sin, **God handed people over to him**. If you do not follow Jesus, you belong to Satan. Satan does all he can to keep people in darkness.

**Our fight is to show people Jesus**, so that he can bring them into the light, into his light.

**Now Satan, will throw things at us to prevent us from doing this. DOUBTS, FEAR etc**

**GOD**

I'd like us to pick up **2 things to look at from this passage where we need engage in warfare**.

- 1. Demolishing Arguments against the knowledge of God.**
- 2. Taking thoughts captive.**

## **1. Demolishing arguments**

Our mission, on this earth, is not just to live good lives, **but to take Jesus to everyone who doesn't know him**. We do this in the way we talk and the way we behave, so actions are important.

You will hear arguments against the knowledge of God, like the slogans on the buses in London: **"There's probably no God. Now stop worrying and enjoy your life."**

What Paul is encouraging us to do is **not to fight these battles the way the world does**, he doesn't want us to use **"marketing or manipulation"** but to **"smash warped philosophies, tearing down barriers erected against the truth of God"**.

We must **present the truth, backed up by authentic Christian lives**. When we heard Tim Keller in London a couple of weeks ago he talked about the best way to engage with friends and colleagues where there is an area of disagreement, is **to listen to them and over time be able to explain their point of view better than they can**, then you have the ground to come in with the truth that counters their point of view. If you try and argue your point early on, you will find it very hard to convince them of the truth.

I am purposely **not going to go into detail of what our weapons are today**, we will spend time in the coming weeks looking at these in much more detail.

Another obvious weapon that the world doesn't have is **prayer**. This is a crucial weapon against accusations or arguments opposed to god.

We are currently running the **Christianity explored** course. This is a fabulous course which brings the truth of what Jesus has done to those on the course. But I don't believe this is what will make this course successful.

I don't think the lovely food is the make or break, or even the great atmosphere at ABC. **The amount of prayer and our willingness to step out in faith will be the determining factors.**

Please could I encourage you to sign up on the board at the back.

**So the thing we are to fight for is to see people coming to know Jesus.**

## **2. Taking thoughts captive.**

The second area of **conflict is more of a personal one**. "we take every thought captive and make it obedient to Christ".

Now I don't know about, you but **have you ever in your life thought of something that you know you shouldn't?** Maybe **this week?** Maybe **Today?** Maybe even **during this meeting?**

Maybe you have **thought badly of someone, your spouse, a parent, a child, your church leaders?**

Friends, **this is where Satan wins** in so many people's lives. **He sows lies into our minds, and we believe him!**

Paul in this passage is urging us **to do battle with our thoughts**. Take them captive and obedient to Christ. Basically, **don't let them take a foothold, killing them dead because of what Jesus has done.**

If we do not take these thoughts captive, **they will turn into strongholds (what is a stronghold?),** and these too will need breaking down.

Again in CX we are hoping that the truth they hear will start to break down strongholds of unbelief, but **I'm sure we would do better helping others if we were completely free ourselves.**

**I'll keep banging the drum for great marriages and Godly parenting,** so we need to break down strongholds we have in our lives that have come from our own examples of parenting, or marriages in our families, which are ungodly.

**SLOW FADE VIDEO**

**YOU**

Lets hear the message from this song. Lets not let the small thoughts develop into bigger strongholds that can destroy lives.

**So to recap.**

We need to understand that **there is conflict in this world**. We are in battles but **we do not fight the same way the world does**.

In this passage we see 2 areas in which we must fight. Together for Jesus on his mission, **demolishing arguments against the knowledge of God**. And secondly individually **taking captive and destroying those thoughts that could lead to much worse situations**.

So how on earth do we do this? How **do we take captive these thoughts, or destroy the strongholds?**

The key to this is the phrase: **“powerful God-tools”. “they (the weapons) have divine power”**

**Our weapons are divine, they are God’s weapons**. We cannot do this in our own strength.

**Doing things in our own strength is the worldliest way of doing things.**

Phil 4:13 says: **I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.**

**WE**

Friends if we as a church want to be effective for the glory of God, we will need to fight, to do this we must go on being filled with the HS.

What a privilege it is to serve the only true God, to be part of his mission to this earth, to see peoples lives changes. Let us remember clearly these words of Paul warning of not getting caught up in worldly wisdom, but looking to him for all we need to overcome the enemy.

Jack Handey in his book Fuzzy moments writes- “there use to be this bully who would demand my lunch money everyday. Since I was smaller, I would give it to him. Then I decided to fight back.. I started to take karate lessons, but the instructor wanted 5 dollars a lesson. That was a lot of money. I found out that it was cheaper to pay the bully so I gave up karate.

To many times, we find it easier to pay the bully than learn how to defeat him.

**Questions for small groups.**

**1. How can we engage with those who don’t know Jesus in our primary fight to demolish arguments against God.**

**2. What are some of the areas in our lives that are strongholds. Think of different strongholds that may be particularly relevant to men or women – they won’t all be the same.**

**Split into groups men/women.**

**3. Are there any areas in your life where you know you haven’t taken thoughts captive and a stronghold is being formed.**

**PRAY FOR EACH OTHER**