



Spiritual Warfare: Pulling Down Strongholds

2 CORINTHIANS 10:4-6
LESSON 8 – DISOBEDIENCE PUNISHED

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Are You Ready to Fight?

- ▶ In 2 Corinthians 10:1-2 Paul states, “Now I, Paul, myself am pleading with you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ—who in presence am lowly among you, but being absent am bold toward you. 2 But I beg you that when I am present I may not be bold with that confidence by which I intend to be bold against some, who think of us as if we walked according to the flesh.
- ▶ In standing against the errors and false teaching of the Judaizers and those who were influencing the Corinthian church to disregard the teaching of the gospel of grace, Paul warns the church now that if he has to come deal with them in person he will be bold and confident in his actions against those teaching and embracing error.

Are You Ready to Fight?

- ▶ Paul then goes on in verse 3 and writes, “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh.”
- ▶ This sets the stage for verses 4-6 - For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.
- ▶ This morning we are looking at verse 6 – Paul says he is ready to come to them and in the fight for truth punish all disobedience. What does he mean by this? What is Paul prepared to do in defense of the gospel?

Punishing Disobedience

- ▶ The word for punishing means to take revenge or to inflict justice. Part of spiritual warfare, beyond battling the ideas and philosophies of those who rebel against God and His Word, is a defense of the church herself against those who through embracing the error of false teachers go on to see the fruit that false doctrine produces. False teaching always leads to sinful thinking, speaking, and living.
- ▶ Matthew 15:18 But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. 19 For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. 20 These are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man.”

Punishing Disobedience

- ▶ The word translated “disobedience” comes from 2 words that describe mishearing, or hearing amiss. This is a direct reference to filtering out what you don’t want to hear. It is closing your ears to the truth – an unwillingness to hear that leads to active disobedience.
- ▶ This describes those within the church who twist Scripture to their own liking. They hear what they want to hear and the preachers who teach these errors are scratching itching ears.
- ▶ 2 Timothy 4:3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; 4 and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.

Punishing Disobedience

- ▶ This takes spiritual warfare a step further than battling ideas. Why? Ideas have consequences, and it is not enough to rebuke and correct the erroneous ideas. There comes a point when the person who has embraced the error must be dealt with, especially if they are in the church.
- ▶ Paul is showing us that these weapons that we have that are mighty for pulling down strongholds include church discipline.
- ▶ How can you punish someone in the church if our weapons are not carnal – not earthly? God has given the church the authority and power to punish disobedience by church discipline and ultimately, turning those who refuse to hear the truth yet profess to be Christians over to Satan!

Church Discipline

- ▶ 1 Timothy 5:20 Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear.
- ▶ 1 Corinthians 5:5 deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.
- ▶ In other words, remove them from the fellowship of the church and turn them out into the world, ruled by the prince of the power of the air and the spirit of the age...put them out of the Kingdom of God visibly gathered as a local church and send them back to the world because they think and live as if they are not regenerate. They act like and are to be thought of by you as “a heathen and tax collector.” (Matt. 18:17).

Time for Correction

- ▶ Paul goes on to say that he is ready to come and punish disobedience when “your obedience is fulfilled.” In other words, he will not be coming back to Corinth until they demonstrate a willingness to hear the truth (his rebuke of their error) and to obey God’s Word given to them through him as an apostle.
- ▶ In 2 Cor. 2:1 he has said, “But I determined this within myself, that I would not come again to you in sorrow.”
- ▶ And in 2 Cor. 1:23 he had also written, “Moreover I call God as witness against my soul, that to spare you I came no more to Corinth.” His trip would have been disastrous for them in their current spiritual condition.

Time for Correction

- ▶ So if the church will hear the truth and obey the truth, then he is ready to come and help them deal with those who still refuse to hear. He wants them to start the fight for truth in their own hearts and minds and then in the church collectively. When they do, a remnant of rebels will be revealed and Paul will come deliver a final blow to root them out and rid the church of those who would willingly distort the gospel and Christian living.
- ▶ We understand further than the context here links spiritual warfare to church discipline if we look at chapter 13.

Two or Three Witnesses

- ▶ 2 Corinthians 13: This will be the third time I am coming to you. “By the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established.” 2 I have told you before, and foretold as if I were present the second time, and now being absent I write to those who have sinned before, and to all the rest, that if I come again I will not spare— 3 since you seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, who is not weak toward you, but mighty in you. 4 For though He was crucified in weakness, yet He lives by the power of God. For we also are weak in Him, but we shall live with Him by the power of God toward you. 5 Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified. 6 But I trust that you will know that we are not disqualified.

Defending the Purity of the Church

- ▶ Every accusation of who is continuing to live in rebellion to the truth will be able to be confirmed by multiple witnesses. This is the Biblical standard of proof.
- ▶ When he comes this time, he will not be meek and gentle, but bold. He “will not spare...” Why the harsh tone? Because false doctrine is deadly!
- ▶ What is at stake? “Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith.”
- ▶ Your salvation is in the balance!
- ▶ Spiritual warfare is not only a method of apologetics – it is the preaching of the gospel knowing that there are those even within the church that still have not believed. So we go to war for their souls!

Is Jesus Christ in You?

- ▶ The ultimate outcome of daily spiritual battles must be living deeper in the truth of the gospel, walking more closely with Christ, depending upon the Spirit with more confidence and faith, and loving God more today than we did yesterday.
- ▶ Spiritual warfare is a battle for the hearts and minds of men and women who have been blinded and are deaf. It is the Living Word of God that gives them sight and opens their ears to hear and believe the truth of the gospel.

Do You Have Ears to Hear?

- ▶ A key part of examining ourselves to see if we are in the faith is to ask if we want to hear the Word of God? Do we hunger and thirst for it? Do we crave it?
- ▶ Goats don't want to hear the Word. Sheep do, or will eventually. Someone who does not want to hear the Word and actively tried to prevent or hinder it is either a goat being driven away or a sheep being drawn to the fold.
- ▶ Spiritual warfare then is actively preaching, proclaiming, and practicing the Word of God in our daily lives.

The Fragrance of Christ

- ▶ This daily life of spiritual battle is described by Paul back in chapter 2 of 2 Corinthians: 14 Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place. 15 For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. 16 To the one we are the aroma of death leading to death, and to the other the aroma of life leading to life. And who is sufficient for these things?
- ▶ The aroma of death – we stink to the lost.
- ▶ The aroma of life – we are a breath of fresh air and new life to the saved.
- ▶ And who is sufficient for these things? Not us. But always the Word of God is sufficient!! “Preach the Word....in season and out” – whether it is convenient or not.

Next Lesson

- ▶ The Futility of the Lost Man's Mind – Eph. 4:17-19