

WEAPONS OF OUR WARFARE

2 Corinthians 10:3-5

Since September 11, 2001, Osama Bin Laden has been "Public Enemy #1" on the FBI's most wanted list. On May 2, 2011, Navy Seals caught up with him in Afghanistan and ended his ten year hold on that "most wanted" distinction. This religious fanatic, claiming to act for God, sought to be as God. Instead he fulfilled the threat from God made in Matthew 26:52 that *"all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword."* On May 2, 2011 he answered for his crimes against humanity with his life. But it's not over for him yet; we know, *"It's appointed unto man once to die, and after that, the judgment."* A far greater judgment awaits him when he stands before Christ to answer for his idolatry.

We also know our war against Osama Bin Laden didn't end with his death. It only intensified and energized his followers. They, no doubt will carry on his vision of Jihad toward a Muslim dominated World until they are exterminated or converted. *"wars and rumors of wars."*

The church is engaged in warfare also. Her enemy is described in Ephesians 6:12 as *"spiritual wickedness in high places."* Her weapons are not carnal but mighty through God. This warfare is for the hearts of God's elect, justified by Christ's blood, yet in bondage to Satan.

Our unchangeable standing of justification was given us by the Father in the everlasting covenant of grace. The responsibility for our sins was laid on Christ, our Surety and Savior. He would come in time and satisfy all those conditions for our salvation by his doing and dying. When we fell in Adam, we did not fall from grace. Though we sinned against God and sided with Satan against God, *"God laid on him the iniquity of us all."* (Isaiah 53:6). Though we joined with Satan and opposed the God who loves us, chose us and "created us in Christ Jesus" he never stopped loving us. As fallen creatures, we need a deliverer skillful in the word **and** work of righteousness who can say with authority, as did Moses to Pharaoh, *"Let my people go."*

So, for the love of his elect, God sent us a David to destroy our Goliath. Not your conventional army with conventional weapons and tactics, but a single man with a simple sling and a single smooth stone to do what no other man could do: *"deliver them, who, through fear of death were all their lifetimes subject to bondage."* (To their Goliath) This Savior, of whom (**David was a type**) this *"Stone which the builders rejected,"* this Rock upon which Christ said, *"I will build my church,"* dealt sin a death blow by his substitutionary death on the Cross as a satisfaction to Law and justice for those he represented. As that single stone from David's sling crushed the head of Goliath, so Christ the "chief Cornerstone" crushed the head of Satan with a death blow when he *"gave his life a ransom for many."* That ransom paid in his blood is the sinners' assurance Christ will awaken every soul for whom he died to the truth. Having reconciled God to us by the blood of his cross, the work now is to reconcile us to himself by making known to our minds and hearts that complete satisfaction he rendered by his obedience sufferings and death for

his elect. The battle now is to change the hearts and minds of those already justified to rest in him.

How does God accomplish this change? He enlists, (He makes willing) a number of former rebels which no man can number out of every kindred tongue and nation, chosen and commissioned by him and sends them to places like Joppa, with words of life to a Roman centurion whose occupation was destroyer of life, to the desert with the words of life to a eunuch in search of life, To Philippi where a jailer who would take his life, is given eternal life. To Nineveh, where the gospel Jonah reluctantly preached was so powerful the whole city repented. To Albany Georgia, the "good life" city, where there is none good, no not one, and where, when this same gospel Jonah preached was delivered, almost no one repented. But, to a few, (the no good) has God sent the gospel; chosen before time, quickened in time and redeemed for all time by free grace with a permanent and abiding fellowship in the household and family of faith; and made grateful warriors in the king's army.

What is the mission of God's army? Is it not to "go, ye into all the world and preach the gospel? Go and tell them what Christ has accomplished for his people. Tell them the work is finished, satisfaction is made.

Why is the preaching of the gospel so vital? **2 Corinthians 10:1-5** gives us access into God's mind concerning the importance of the gospel.

I submit to you three reasons the gospel, delivered by former rebels turned warriors, loyal to the King of Kings is vital to the elect. The King's gospel is:

1. It is the "Power of God unto salvation, *“For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith.”*
2. It unlocks the "mystery of godliness" in regeneration and conversion. How can God be just and justify the ungodly.
3. It authorizes and motivates the recipient thereof to, **(1 Peter 3:15)** *“sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.”* It convinces the redeemed sinner that the manner, the message and the means which effected his salvation is that which effects all who are saved.

Warriors in the king's army are called on to fight. Paul urges Timothy to "fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life." (1 Timothy 6:12) That faith is the Gospel. The gospel is a good fight, worthy of our engagement because it is God's means to:

Expose the enemy. I can't fight an enemy I don't know.

Engage the enemy. Christ's command is "GO". Don't wait for them.

Exorcise the enemy. Of his demon for one “*greater than he that is in the world.*”

1. It exposes the enemy.

For almost ten years Osama Bin Laden was careful not to expose his whereabouts. His defense was to keep America thinking he was here when he was there, knowing a moving target is harder to hit. Though we knew him to be our enemy yet we could not expose him. We were looking for him in all the wrong places. Every tape we received showed him in some mountainous region of Pakistan or some cave in Afghanistan. In reality he was living in luxury in sight of the American embassy in Kabul, Afghanistan. Exposing him turned out to be much harder than destroying him.

That’s what the Gospel is about; exposing the enemy. You can’t fight an enemy you don’t know. **HAS THE ENEMY BEEN EXPOSED TO YOU?** Do you know the enemy of the church? Do you know the enemy **was** you or he **is** you? It’s a tough confession to admit my enmity against God. Everybody knows Satan to be the Arch-enemy. But Satan was dealt a crushing blow by Christ at Calvary. His power over God’s elect to hold in bondage, darkness and fear was broken. But his influence against the justified in Christ is still intense. He is still the accuser of the brethren. The remnant of God’s elect, represented by Christ, redeemed by Christ, righteous in Christ; are by nature yet “*alienated and enemies in our minds by wicked works.*” This charge, though true, is unknown to us until God the Holy Spirit, in the preaching of the gospel convinces (exposes) us of sin, righteousness and judgment; until it exposes us as enemies of God. The evidence of our alienation from God is in the nature of our “wicked works,” (our warfare). **Read 2 Corinthians 10:4** (“*For the weapons of our warfare (after regeneration) are not carnal, but mighty through God.*” By nature, we fight, not the fight of faith but of works. “Carnal” means fleshy. Of the flesh, having the nature of flesh, in the power of depraved flesh. **What are those wicked works?** Any attempt to be justified by whatever means than the imputed righteousness of Christ is carnal and stands against spiritual weapons mighty through God. **Read Luke 14:31-32.** “*Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth, (in the scriptures) whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Satan’s advice is, “sure you can.” Only those fooled, or ignorant or diabolical would go, (with carnal weapons) against two to one odds by those equipped with weapons mighty through God. But that’s what we all do by nature. Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, (while God carries) he sendeth an ambassador, (a preacher) and desireth (God’s) conditions of peace.*” (Perfect satisfaction to law and justice rendered by Christ to establish a perfect righteousness freely imputed by God to “whosoever will.” This is the message which reconciles the sinner to God.

Carnal weapons are no match for those given by God. The truth of the Word of God will always prevail to deliver those saints “in Christ,” yet under the dominion of Satan by nature. Satan cannot hold them indefinitely. They will desire God’s conditions for peace.

If we, according to Ephesians 6:12, “*wrestle not against flesh and blood*” after regeneration and conversion, then it stands to reason by nature we wrestle with flesh and blood against the Spirit. We seek to be justified before God based on character and conduct; that’s all the flesh can produce. Until God saves us by his grace, we are stuck in dead works. Ignorant of grace, we engage in battle against a holy God with carnal weapons. Carnal weapons are those used by false apostles such as eloquence, fleshly wisdom, carnal reasoning and great swelling words of vanity to promote legal, works religion. Things that swell the pride of men who think their faith, repentance, perseverance recommend them to God. This exposes us to be enemies of God, all the while claiming to be friends of God.

Are your weapons carnal or mighty through God? Have you been exposed as the enemy? Have you considered the consequences of war with God? Have you sought his terms of peace? At the judgment will you offer your filthy rags works religion or plead his righteousness for all your salvation? Dare we come against the Omnipotent God with carnal weapons?

Thank God he exposes the enemy. The gospels mission is to expose God’s elect to be by nature God’s enemy. How does God accomplish this?

2. Engages the enemy. 2 Corinthians 10: 4-5 “*(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)*⁵ *Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;*”

The first action God takes is to “pull down our strongholds.” What are these strongholds? A stronghold is any refuge “*of lies*” where sinners seek security from the wrath to come. We know the first stronghold to be the heart: the mind, affections and will. “*For from within, out of the heart precede evil thoughts.*” By nature we are **(1)** “*Alienated and enemies in our minds by (evidenced by) wicked works.*” **(2)** Our heart is deceitful and desperately wicked, and **(3)** our wills are in bondage to Satan. **Luke 13:34**, “*How often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!*”

It is here God engages the enemy. We would never engage him.

1. The mind: **2 Corinthians 10:5**: “*Casting down imaginations.*” We define “repentance” as a radical change of mind. The first being; “**Psalm 50:21**; “*Thou thoughtest I was altogether such an one as thyself.*” When did we first think God was altogether like us? **In the garden.** “*You shall be as God,*” **knowing** good and evil; meaning you can set your own standard of right and wrong. Men set their own standard every day. We “bend” the laws of the land. We even boast in this. God knows no such standard. “*Do and live, disobey and die.*” is his standard. The mind, steeped in legalism by nature imagines God to be lax in law and large in love. God will accept us if we do the best we can; if our good outweighs the bad. We reason that God would be unjust to hold us accountable for those things we could not do; i.e., God would be unjust to require more than we could render. Opposite this imagination is the reality that God does not grade on

the curve, but “*in righteousness*” Such is the mind of those described in **Ephesians 4:18**; “*Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.*” **Psalm 2:1**; “*Why do the heathen rage, (oppose God) and the people imagine a vain thing?*” (Salvation by other than Christ’s righteousness imputed.) Ignorance reigns. Casting down imaginations is needful, inevitable and profitable.

The mind is the door to our being. “*As a man thinketh, in his heart, so is he.*” We are what our mind feeds us.

b. Affections. The mind governs the affections. Men with darkened minds love darkness. Men with enlightened minds love light. The answer to a love of darkness is truth. **John 3:18-21** confirms this truth. 18 “*He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.* 19 *And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.* 20 *For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.* 21 *But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.*”

Men love their god. *They attribute to him every blessing in life.* They give unto him their loyalty and devotion. But until the Holy Spirit of God sends a warrior with mighty weapons, with the gospel of grace which, **2 Corinthians 10:5a** “*casts down our imaginations and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God,*” our affections are toward an idol of our imagination. How strong is that affection? Bin Laden died for his because he exalted himself above the knowledge of God. (He made himself to be more than God says of men like him.) He didn’t know the true and living God, what God declares of himself. He imagined God to be such an one as himself. Bin Laden loved his idol.

c. Will. If the mind be dark and the affections of the heart only evil continually, our will is a slave to evil. By nature we love this darkness. Why? Because our deeds are evil. Paul wrote in **Romans 6:17-18**, “*But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.* 18 *Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.* Free will is a myth. Our freedom is to do what we **want** to do, not what we **ought** to do. We WILL NOT come to the light. The will is in bondage to its god.

Casting down imaginations begins with a change of mind concerning who God is and who we are by nature. It is successful when it stirs up the affections to disown and abandon our idol. It is accomplished in the elect when God, using the gospel, engages the enemy to examine the truth. Remember it was Christ who said; “*If you continue in my word you shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free.*”

God does not leave his children alone. *“He has not cast away his people whom he foreknew.”* He exposes their enmity with God, he engages the enemy. *“Come let us reason together saith your God.”* *Though your sins be as scarlet they shall be white as snow.”*

God uses the gospel in the hands of a warrior in his army to expose the enemy, to engage the enemy and thirdly to:

3. Exorcise the enemy. 2 Corinthians 10:5b. To free of an evil spirit. *“and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.”* Here again we are made to see the importance of knowledge. By nature our loftiest notions of God and Christ are secondary to our own. We think way more highly of ourselves than we should and conversely way less than we should of God. We exalt our imaginations of self above the knowledge of God. This knowledge of God is that which he has revealed concerning himself and sinners. what his word says of himself and about us.

We see evidence of this by nature, in Christ's work to redeem his people. We imply his obedience, suffering and death on the cross to be nothing more than an attempt at our salvation. We say his work is nothing more than a platform whereby we might complete, by our works what he started and could not finish.

Such thinking implies that God's plan for redeeming his people is flawed; making it possible that some for whom Christ died might perish. Even worse it attributes to the sinner's free will decision as that which seals the deal. Until this evil spirit is exorcised, every thought will be to the sinner's obedience and not Christ's obedience. This exorcism comes only by confrontation with the truth of the gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Saving faith, that faith of believers, administered to sinners at regeneration and conversion immediately looks to Christ and his obedience as their source of all grace here and all glory hereafter. Our emphasis on believing or repenting or whatever condition our denomination put upon us for acceptance is gladly rejected for his obedience, suffering and death.

If he satisfied law and justice, and he did: if he established a perfect righteousness and freely imputed it to his elect, and he did: If he sends a preacher to declare the gospel to sinners, and he does: If he has begun that good work in you, then he will show you of Christ in every scripture. He will bring into captivity, he will capture every thought and show you of Christ. *“Search the scriptures, for in them ye think you have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me.”* (John 5:39) It is the scriptures which testify to his obedience and not the sinner's that stand us in unchangeable righteousness.

The weapons of our warfare, the Word of God, The Sword of the Spirit and the Word of Truth are sufficient and necessary to engage and subdue the enemy. Those truths which convinced the Fathers of sin, righteousness and judgment are the same truths that convinced us and will convince those yet enemies in their minds by wicked works. The need for warriors and weapons

mighty through God are as needed today as ever because **God has a most wanted list**. Is your name on this list? He wants those sinners he gave to Christ. He will have them. Christ has already redeemed them. Mighty weapons will end their rebellion and rest their hope on his obedience. My hope is in him. I recommend him to any sinner at enmity with God.

The weapons we employ in spiritual warfare are those used by others to our conversion. We faithfully discharge our duty as soldiers in the Kings army knowing "*The people who sat in darkness saw great light*" includes us. Some who sit in darkness will see the light. That Light is Christ. "*I AM the Light of the world.*" The gospel warrior with his mighty weapons, all products of Christ's obedience is God's means to that end.

Put on the whole armor and stand.

By Winston Pannell