

Our Warfare
II Corinthians 10:1-6

The Christian life is a warfare! This aspect of being a Christian comes as a surprise to many now Christians. They are not adequately warned about the nature of the Christian life so they are surprised when they come under attack from the enemy. actually, the warfare is a part of the conflict between God and His Adversary, Satan. This conflict pre-dates even human history, and shall continue until God terminates human history in judgment in His own time.

In all warfare there are two important aspects. There are certain defensive concerns that one must give attention to. The Christian soldier must learn how to defend himself from the attacks of the enemy. This is the concern of Paul in the great Ephesian passage in which he discusses the armor of the Christian. The armor that he describes is primarily defensive. However, we know from military experience that no army ever wins a battle with just defense. While attention must be given to it, it is not the only thing.

The other aspect of warfare is the offensive. This is the concern of Paul in our text. He is explaining his way of doing things to the Corinthians *in* the last chapters of the book. Paul has been severely criticized by some false teachers in Corinth, so he presents some defense for his past and present actions. His actions can be explained by the nature of the warfare *in* which we are involved. Unless you understand the nature of the battle, you will not understand the response of Paul.

Our situation is the same as his. We, too, are in the battle. We are under responsibility to press the battle offensively. We must understand the nature of the battle or we will make fatal spiritual mistakes. Let us look at this passage in light of our need.

I. THE TEMPERAMENT OF THE SOLDIERS IN OUR WARFARE.

One of the serious points of criticism is reflected in our text. "Now, I, Paul, myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, who in presence am base among you, but being absent am bold toward you." Those last words reflect the criticism. They were saying, "Paul is a mild man when he is present with us, but when he writes a letter he is as bold as a lion." They were accusing him of really being a coward who would hide behind a piece of paper and pen. This criticism must have stung Paul, at least he felt it was important that he respond to it. His response gives us an important insight into the nature of our warfare.

What about the temperament of a soldier in this warfare? In the wars of the world, military leaders try to develop a certain temperament in their men. They will seek to build into them a deep hatred for their enemy. They will show them propaganda films and subject them to lectures about the nature of the enemy. They will seek to develop in them a bent toward violence. They will want them to be confident and courageous. But what about the soldiers of the Cross?

According to Paul, Jesus modeled the temperament God desires in us. The nature of the warfare demands that we have this temperament that Paul sums up as "meekness and gentleness."

"Meekness" is the first of these elements of temperament. Jesus spoke of Himself as being "meek and lowly in heart". He made it a primary mark of the subjects of His kingdom when He said, "Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth." Meekness is not weakness, but is rather strength under control. William Barclay says, "It is the quality of the man whose anger is so mastered and so controlled that he is always angry at the right time and never at the wrong time." The opposite of meekness is uncontrolled anger. When insult upon insult upon piled upon him at the crops, he never opened his mouth in response. Yet he could express anger whenever the occasion called for it. The temple-keepers could bear witness to the fire that could be in his anger. This ability to handle injustice and wrong is important in the temperament of the Christian soldier. He is to emulate His Lord at this point. Helpfully this is one of the fruits which the Holy Spirit produces in the life of the Christian.

"Gentleness" is the other temperament trait important for the Christian soldier. The world would not include this on its job description for a soldier. This word could be translated "forbearance". Someone translated it "sweet reasonableness." This person is one who does not always press for his own rights, but who will be generous when dealing with others. In the life of Jesus the experience with the woman taken in adultery may be the supreme example of this quality. Jesus had every right to press for the judgment to fall upon this woman since she was guilty of violating the holy law of God. But, Jesus was generous with her. He extended forgiveness to her. He provided her with another opportunity. This gentle person did not always go by the book when he was dealing with human beings.

When we look at the objective in this warfare, it becomes clear why these elements of temperament are so important. The objective is not to destroy men, but to save them. You relate to them like the Lord Jesus Christ in light of the objective. It was true that Paul had been a gentle, forbearing person during his ministry in Corinth. He had been following the model provided by our Lord. So, we must be if we are to achieve the objectives that the Lord has set for us.

II. THE WEAPONS OF THE SOLDIERS IN OUR WARFARE

Paul's discussion of the weapons relates to another criticism that was leveled at Paul. "But I beseech you, that I may not be bold when I am present with that confidence, wherewith I think to be bold against some, which think of us as if we walked according to the flesh." They were contending that Paul was living like any ordinary man, "walking according to the flesh." This accuses him of having worldly motivations and worldly methods.

Paul felt that he must respond to this accusation. "For though we walk in the flesh" this is a confession that he is a more human being physically. "In the flesh" is much different from "according to the flesh." "Flesh" in the first instance refers to our physical being, our bodily flesh. We cannot escape this as long as we are

in this world. But "according to the flesh" uses flesh to refer to the carnal nature of man, that inclination that is in man to be independent of God. Paul affirms, "we do not war after the flesh." This means that we do not carry on our campaign, conduct ourselves as soldiers like the soldiers of this world. We use different kinds of weapons.

"For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds." First, our weapons are not carnal. Carnal is related to "according to the flesh". They are not "fleshly". They do not originate with human nature, they are different. Indeed, they are mighty through God! The very might of God Himself is expressed through the weapons that we use. But what are these weapons? The world will question their being mighty. The Word of God is the first of these weapons. That is, the Word of God as it is contained in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. "The gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth." Paul went to Corinth armed with the Message of God in order to take a city for Jesus Christ. The modern church seems to have lost confidence in its weapons. We are constantly searching for some new word instead of simply proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Prayer is another of these weapons. "Truly the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much." The world smiles when the Christian talks about the power of prayer, but we know that the power of God is expressed in response to the prayers of His people.

A righteous life is another of these weapons. A good life in the hand of the Holy Spirit can be like a mighty missile in the plans of a modern general. It can devastate the plans of the enemy, it can penetrate his most important defenses. When character and conduct reflect the glory of Jesus Christ, the enemy is in trouble. When you consider the warfare, these are about the only weapons the Commander in Chief La:3 given us. He knows the nature of the battle, and He believes that these are all that we need when they are energized by the power of God. The might of God can be expressed through these weapons when they are properly used.

III. THE OBJECTIVE OF THE CAMPAIGN OF OUR WARFARE

What is the offensive objective in this warfare? Obviously the defensive objective is to withstand the attacks of the enemy, and when we have done everything to stand! But this does not speak of the objective we have offensively. Paul points to this in our text.

Our weapons are designed to pull down strong holds, "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." Two expressions in this statement reveal the objective. The first is the "knowledge of God." The objective is to bring all men into a saving knowledge of the living God. The second is "bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." We have as our objective bringing men into such a knowledge of God that every thought of their mind will be an obedient servant of Jesus Christ. The figure is that of bringing people into the promised land of "obedience to Christ."

There are certain things that stand in the way of achieving this objective. There are "imagnations". The word could be translated "arguments" or "reasonings". It refers to those rationalizations that sinful man creates that block his coming to know God. In order to achieve the objective these arguments have to be overthrown.

The overthrow does not come through the violence of brainwashing, but rather the compelling evidence of the Gospel presented through a compassionate life in the power of the Holy Spirit. There are also certain other "high things" that stand in the way. This may well refer to human pride that keeps men from humbling themselves sufficiently to receive the knowledge of tile Lord. The objective in our warfare is to bomb every such high place in order that men might come to know Cod who to know is life eternal.

Maybe we should take an appraisal of our Present position in light of this objective. Are we being used of God to bring others to a -saving, knowledge of Himself? Are we waging an winning warfare offensively? It may he that some of us have been too concerned about the defensive., and not enough about the offensive side of the warfare. The weapons are still useful and mighty if we will only use them.

Conclusion:

As a church and as members in the church, we need to make a recommitment to press the battle. The enemy is working effectively ill our day building high walls around people to protect them from the knowledge of God. Cod batters these barriers down through His people. The Holy Spirit work., us. Unless we are in the battle, the battle will he lost. Are you ready for active duty?