

## ***Taking Captive Every Thought*** **2 Corinthians 10:1-6**

INTRO:

What is the most important thing for you? I think of Jesus' question in **Matthew 16:26** *"For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?"* This truth is why Paul was concerned to defend himself to the Corinthians. He wanted to make sure they understand the importance of eternal realities. He first deals with the slander lodged against him, and then pushed forth the reality of spiritual warfare that took place in Corinth.

*I. Please Don't Make Me (v. 1-2)*

*II. Spiritual Warfare (v. 3-6)*

*I. Please Don't Make Me (v. 1-2)*

**2 Corinthians 10:1-2** *"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. 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."*

A. Having dealt with the gift to the needy believers in Jerusalem, the Apostle now returns to those who stir up trouble in the Corinthian church. Paul is so disturbed he personally pleads with the believers. He begins by reminding us about Who we serve. Paul's earnest desire was to be as far as possible as *"meek"* and *"gentle"* as the Lord Jesus was. This makes us think of **Matthew 11:29**.

*"Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."*

However, this was not written when Paul wrote this verse. The word, *"lowly in heart"*, is a different word, but the word *"meek"* is the same. More significantly it is the word used in the LXX of **Numbers 12:3**

*"(Now the man Moses was very meek, more than all men who were on the face of the earth.)"*

Moses was meek because he allowed God to defend him. Here Paul is suggesting two things. First, his style of leadership is an imitation of Christ's. Second, he will have Christ defend him in the end.

B. Paul then cited the slander lodged against him.

*"who in presence am lowly among you, but being absent am bold toward you."*

In effect, the false apostles accused Paul of being a coward. On the contrary, Paul then begs the Corinthian people to not make him be bold when he came.

***“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”***

Paul had authority, but he refused to use it unless he had to use it.

## ***II. Spiritual Warfare (v. 3-6)***

**2 Corinthians 10:3-5** ***“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. 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.”***

A. Paul is just a man, yet when he battles for Christ he is equipped with supernatural weapons. We do not always realize that Christianity is spiritual warfare. Paul talked about this often. The most famous picture Paul drew is in **Ephesians 6:10-18**.

***“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God in order that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, in order that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints.”***

Here again is a text in which the imagery is so vivid we almost miss the point. These elements of armor are ours in Christ. How sharp is your sword. How strong is your relationship with Christ? How much do you pray? Pray with discipline and purpose. They are tools to enable us to do battle with Satan and the enemies of God who are superior in might to us without Christ.

B. Paul’s greatest tool was the Word of God, and specifically the Gospel. Do you remember what Paul said in **1 Corinthians 1:18-19**?

***“For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written: ‘I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, And bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.’”***

C. Paul fleshed this out in **verses 22–24**.

***“For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.”***

D. Paul waged warfare with spiritual weapons as defined by the armor and exhibited in the Gospel and prayer. With these weapons the apostle sought to ***“bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.”*** Paul wanted to capture the minds of unbelievers and bring them into subjection to the Lord Christ.

***What do we learn from this?***

We are not apostles but we must not forget the power of the Gospel. It is the Gospel that convinces people of sin. It is the Gospel that transforms lives. It is our prayers which energizes the Gospel.

We need to work with the Word of God the Spirit of God and the power of God to win the war of our minds. How can we seek to take other’s thoughts captive to the obedience of Christ when our own minds run wild with thoughts of sin? The tools of battle we use in persuading others we need to use in controlling our own thoughts.

**Hymn #378 *Only One Life***