

The Greatest War Campaign of All Time

by James Jennings

This sermon emphasizes the seriousness of being redeemed by Christ's blood, highlighting the weight of God's love for believers. It delves into the concept of engaging in a spiritual war campaign, focusing on tearing down strongholds in people's minds through the power of God's Word and the Holy Spirit. The importance of knowing and exalting Jesus Christ as the central message in evangelism and personal life is underscored, urging believers to walk in the Spirit and not according to the flesh.

Scripture: Colossians 1:16, Ephesians 6:17, Luke 11:13, Romans 15:18, 2 Timothy 4:17, Philippians 2:13, 1 Peter 3:15, Galatians 4:4, Hebrews 1:10

Topics: "Redemption through Christ", "Spiritual Warfare"

Description

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Transcript

To preach to people who have been redeemed by the blood of Christ is a serious thing. When you think of God's love for the saints, for Christians, you realize this is not a light matter. It's, you know, the King's saying, go over there and give those people a message.

And when he says, I bought them with the blood of my Son, you realize this is a weighty thing. So even the kids, I'm glad to have you guys here. When I was a kid, I wasn't too interested in the sermon aspect.

But maybe something I say could be considered by you guys. Well, I'm giving two messages today, and I've still struggled with which one to give right now. I'm just being honest with you guys.

Let's turn to 2 Corinthians 10. You know, transparency is a beautiful thing in a church. Transparent, you know, you can see through.

It's good. There's some level of being seen through in our hearts that we need. We're really going to have a unified church.

So 2 Corinthians 10. The title of this message is the greatest war campaign of all time. The greatest war campaign of all time.

Meaning there's no greater campaign of war that has ever existed. And that's what I want to look at this morning. And let's pray.

Father, I just pray, Lord, help this to hit the spot. Own it. Give these brothers and sisters some bread this morning, even some crumbs.

Lord, something here that would stick with them, that would be applicable to their lives and to this church. And so Lord, we need Your help in the midst of the battle front that we are on. And so Lord, would You give some grace right now, some help.

In Jesus' name, Amen. So 2 Corinthians 10 starts with Paul defending his ministry. And it goes all the way to chapter 13, verse 10.

It ends right around 13.10. If you read that, we're not going to read that entire section. But Paul is defending his apostolic ministry. Now that's interesting.

Because when someone defends their ministry, they also then reveal what their ministry looks like. And that matters to us. Even you all, as a church, it matters.

This Apostle Paul, when he was here on earth and laboring for the souls of men, and laboring to establish churches, what did his ministry look like? I mean, any person, any soldier looks at the greatest generals in military history to glean from their tactics. To understand the war better and to understand how to fight in the war. So let's read verses 1 just to 6. I, Paul, myself entreat you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, I, who am humble when face to face with you, but bold toward you when I am away.

They were kind of saying that about Paul. Verse 2, I beg of you that when I am present, I may not have to show boldness with such confidence as I count on showing against some who suspect us of walking according to the flesh. So they were suspecting Paul of doing that.

And then he says this, for though we walk in the flesh, meaning the human body, we are not waging war according to the flesh. Verse 4, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God and take every thought captive to obey Christ, being ready to punish every disobedience when your obedience is complete.

You guys see where I get the idea of a war campaign, right? We hear warfare in there. We hear destroy. We hear captives.

He's using that type of terminology. That word warfare right there could be rendered campaign. The idea is a military expedition of campaign.

Paul the Apostle, he looked at planting churches and he looked at Corinth as he was waging war. He had a military campaign going in there seeking to establish a biblical church. That's what we're doing in Maine.

You guys are part, I don't know if you knew about it, you guys are part of a war campaign. You guys are part of an expedition into this territory, waging war for people's souls. Did you know that? Now Paul puts it that way.

That's helpful. One, because we need to remember that. So, that's what we're going to look at today.

So, I was going to say something about they're suspecting us of walking according to the flesh. Just for the sake of time, I'll be brief on that. They were suspecting that Paul was doing things in a fleshly way.

What does that mean? Well, there's certain verses here where they were accusing him of kind of being humble when he was around them, but his letters were really bold and severe. So, it was kind of like the idea, like Paul's like a little tiny chihuahua behind the fence. And he's barking at us, but then when we see him in person, he runs and he scurries away.

I mean, they were leveling accusations at Paul. They were accusing him, if you look at 10.8, he says, for even if I boast a little too much of our authority, so they were maybe saying he was boasting too much about authority, but what does he say authority is given for? For building you up. So, Paul's domineering.

That man is just high-handed domineering over the church. And he's saying, no, no, I'm building you guys up with my authority. So, the list goes on.

If you read these chapters, you're going to find different things. They were suspecting Paul of ministering according to the flesh, in a fleshly way, using human tactics. He comes in there and he's showing them, no, no, no, no.

We don't use human tactics. We use heavenly tactics that have divine power to tear down strongholds. Now, here's something is with this passage.

How many of you guys know that verse, taking every thought captive? You know what I understood that verse to mean for the first seven years of my Christian life? I thought it was about a command for me to take every one of my own thoughts captive. I just took it like that. I mean, as a new Christian here, I'd come out of a background of lust and things, and so when I read, take every thought captive, I thought, that's great.

I need that. I need to be taking all my thoughts captive. But that's not Paul's point here.

He's not giving us a command to take every thought captive. Paul isn't dealing with defending his personal holiness. Paul is dealing with defending the way and the means by which he ministered.

And so Paul's point is, the way he ministered among the church was by seeing strongholds arise and lofty opinions arise, and Paul himself would tear those strongholds down and take every one of their thoughts captive. So the idea is not you guys take your thoughts captive. The idea is Paul in his apostolic ministry was taking men's thoughts captive.

Other people's thoughts captive with truth. That's important to understand the context. And if you even look at 13.4, this is the same flow.

He says right there, "...but in dealing with you." Again, if someone said, well, what's Paul dealing with in all these verses? He's talking about how he dealt with them. I dealt with you all by seeing lofty opinions in your minds and tearing those down. So that was part of Paul's ministry.

That's something that's involved in planning this church. You guys, some of you, have thoughts that are not according to the knowledge of God. And you don't know it.

I'm not saying I know what those thoughts are. But that happens. And Paul comes in there and he gets a sense of that.

Interesting. Do you see that stronghold in so-and-so's mind? And he's seeking to tear that down. So that's the idea here.

So we're going to look at six things. One, we're in a war campaign. Two, among what people is this war taking place? Three, where is the battlefield of this war? Four, who are the enemies in this war? Five, how is victory in this war achieved? And sixth, what are the weapons we fight with? Those things matter for you all.

You're not an apostle. But Paul, these principles here, how he waged war, that's not just for Paul. Every Christian, as it even says in Ephesians, we are battling against principalities and powers and things that are not of this world.

I was telling some of you all, I was just at the airport in Newark and I had a conversation with a guy who's part of the Baha'i religion. There was no hope of that man ever being saved unless there was divine power involved. I mean, I felt it.

I could have been the cleverest evangelist who's ever lived. Could have had the most gimmicky tracks that have ever existed. I could have had the most wisdom and it wouldn't have done anything unless God came in with power and opened His eyes.

And I felt it. I thought, here I'm going to speak on this and here I feel it talking to this guy in the Baha'i religion and I just felt powerless to do anything. So, first point.

We are in a war campaign. As I mentioned, that word right there, if you look at the text, he says, verse 4, the weapons of our warfare. So the warfare is the weapons of this active army campaign that is going on.

That's what's going on. This expedition into uncharted territory in Portland, Maine. And uncharted people and enemies of the Gospel that you guys don't even know exist yet, but as you seek to wage war, you're going to have them popping up.

You're going to be in a battle. You're in a war. You think about David.

It says, in a time when kings go to war. What did David do? He remained. He fell into adultery.

Well, for Christians, this is the time. We're in war. When you're saved, you enter into a war.

A good soldier. The violent take the kingdom of heaven by force, Jesus said. The Christian life is a life of waging war.

We read it in Psalms 18. What did David do to his enemies? He pursued them until what? Yeah, until they're unable to rise. And you know what I'm called to do? There's that lofty argument.

I pursue that thing until it's unable to rise, and then I take that man and bring him as a captive to the Lord Jesus Christ. And I tear down the strongholds in his life, in his mind, just like that Baha'i guy. I went to the website he gave me.

I read their thing. I went back down and talked to him again. I said, on the website, there's nothing about how your sins can be taken care of.

You believe in this lofty argument that everyone's going to come together and Buddha's from God the Father and Muhammad's from God the Father and Jesus is from God the Father. I had to try to tear that down. Now, nothing happened.

There wasn't any tearing down that I could see. I needed more power. I needed God to move.

But we don't want to be like David. We don't want to be like David. When the kings go to war, we remain.

As Christians, we're in a war against sin in our own life, against the lies in other people's lives, against the lies in your children's minds. What arguments do your children think and have? You've got to tear those down. You think about some of the greatest military campaigns that have existed.

What comes to your mind? Not in the spiritual realm. In the physical. Who's in history? Normandy? Gettysburg? People think about Napoleon? I mean, one list said Hitler had the greatest military campaign when they took out France that had the greatest military power in the world.

It was one of the most unexpected victories when they wiped out the French army. Does that say anything? Yeah, seven days. Israel, the six day war.

You know what? We can kind of look at that and we can go, wow, that's amazing. But I'll tell you guys, the campaign you all are a part of, it is so much more amazing than that. It's of eternal value.

We're waging war for souls. We need a fresh glimpse of that as Christians. I recently did a study called Epaphroditus Receives the Medal of Honor.

And the Medal of Honor is the greatest medal of valor in the military. And a lot of young guys, they think, I want to grow up and win a Medal of Honor. Who cares about a medal that your country gives? What about that honor which like Epaphroditus had, the Christian can have in serving the Lord Jesus Christ? We want that to grip us with that is amazing, that is incredible.

And like Romans 2 says, seek for glory and honor. Not in some proud way, but the Christian is seeking for heavenly glory. They're seeking for honor.

They want to do that which is acceptable for the Lord. We need to be gripped with that. We need to feel the heat.

We're in a war. And this is the greatest campaign we could ever be a part of. Paul, he says, no soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him.

And whether you're a young Timothy and in the ministry or not, there's still this idea of the Christian being vigilant because our enemy prowls around like a roaring lion seeking to whom he may devour. Now, second question. Among whom is the war taking place? And you say, what do you mean? Whom? Think Paul here.

Who's Paul writing to? Is Paul dealing with the lost people out in the world? No. He's dealing with those in the church. So in the immediate context, when you think about this idea of taking thoughts captive, it's not necessarily the Baha'i guy in the airport.

Though that could apply to that man that I want a war with him like that, but the biggest context is the church. The church at Corinth, they had lofty arguments. They had false teaching there.

We'll look at some of that in a moment. But Paul was seeking to take their thoughts captive and to destroy strongholds in those in the church. Why does that matter? Well, one, it helps us to realize we can expect that.

You guys as a new church can expect that there are going to be people, and it could be yourself, so you've got to make sure you get the log out, that have opinions, that have arguments that are not according to the knowledge of God. And when we see that, we don't just do nothing about it. We seek to deal with it.

We seek to destroy it with these divine weapons that we'll look at. So the war, first off, is taking place in the local church. Then secondly, I would say, it's taking place evangelistically with those out there who are lost.

And isn't that what happens? You evangelize to a guy, maybe he comes and visits the church, and then you start seeing problems and problems. There's problems happening right there. There's problems happening all the time.

And you deal with them. So, first point was this. We're in a war campaign.

Paul says here, warfare. You Christians have warfare going on. Secondly, among whom is the war taking place? First, it's in this church where opinions try to rise up.

Secondly, it's with those in the lost world. They are full of thoughts that are not according to Christ. Third thing is this.

Where is the battlefield of this war? Where's the battlefield taking place? Look what Paul says right here. Verse 5, we destroy arguments. Where do those happen? They start in the mind.

Every lofty opinion in the mind raised against the knowledge of God. Well, that's the mind of God. It's things in the mind of man against the mind of God.

And we take every thought captive to obey Christ. And so the battle is taking place in people's minds. Now that's interesting, because you can't look at someone and know what's in the mind.

Meaning there are things you've got to get out of the person's mind before you can deal with them. There are things buried in the mind that you don't even know exist. There's wrong thinking that's not according to Christ that some of us at times don't even know that it is there and that we have to deal with.

So the mind is where the battlefield is taking place. You think about repentance. What does repentance mean? The Greek word people say, metanoia, a change of mind, and that's true.

Part of repentance is a change of mind. So when we're waging war, what are we wanting people to do? We're wanting people's thoughts to be changed where they repent, they change their mind on that certain thought, and that stronghold is destroyed. And now they come as a captive to Jesus Christ to obey Him.

And in this case, the apostolic teaching that Paul had to the church there. So, fourthly, who are the enemies in this war? Who are the enemies? We see right here, verse 4 says what? Strongholds. Verse 5,

arguments, lofty opinions, and they're all raised against the knowledge of God.

So let's think about these enemies for a moment. Let's turn one chapter over. Chapter 11.

This is in the context of Paul defending his ministry. This is in the context of that. Look at verse 1. I wish you would bear with me in a little foolishness.

Do bear with me, for I have the divine jealousy for you, since I betrothed you to one husband to present you as a pure virgin to Christ. But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. Led astray how? Look at verse 4. For if someone comes, proclaims another Jesus than the one we proclaimed, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or if you accept a different gospel.

So Satan in his cunning, he comes in and in men's thoughts, he's trying to present to them a different Jesus, a different spirit, and a different message of the Gospel. And Paul, he says, I'm afraid for you that your thoughts are being led astray. So one thing we need to know about our enemy, we can find right here, our enemy the devil is cunning just like he duped Eve in the garden and deceived her.

Satan still to this day is saying little slanders and changing things subtly to lead men's minds away from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. And so there Paul is saying that to them. The very thing he says in chapter 10 about taking every thought captive, here he's dealing with them and saying your thoughts led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.

But let's think briefly about those words there. Our enemies, these strongholds, arguments, and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God. What are some strongholds? It's interesting even that he uses that word.

I mean, a stronghold. That's not small. And you feel it.

I mean, when you're talking to a guy from the Baha'i religion, you feel it. That guy has a stronghold. And initially, we can go in naively dealing with people's souls and we think, oh, they'll just bow to Christ.

They'll see it so clearly. And what happens? You find out they're blind. It's so hard for them to respond.

They don't want to hear you. Strongholds. One, we just read it.

Proclaiming a false Jesus. Receiving a different spirit. Satan disguising himself as an angel of light.

We read in Colossians, people will try to take you captive by philosophy, empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ. For in Him, the whole fullness of God, the fullness of deity dwells bodily. So philosophy, empty deceit, human traditions.

According to human traditions. Not according to Christ. There's a lot there.

It would take a long time to go into what every one of those sayings means. Some other strongholds. Think of this.

A stronghold of a false profession. Imagine people in a church who have a profession and are not a true Christian. That's a stronghold.

I mean, that's a stronghold. They do not want to give it up. You may not know for certain, but there's some sense of are they really a brother or sister? It's a stronghold.

Strongholds. Here one is that I ran into. That I can be a Christian even though I'm living in sin.

So what if I'm viewing filth on the Internet? I'm a Christian. John, he says no. If you say you know Him but you walk into darkness, you're a liar.

And the truth isn't in you. If you continue to practice sin, you're of your father the devil. But I'm a deacon in the church.

That can be a stronghold that's got to get torn down by the Word of God through the power of the Holy Spirit. Strongholds. People thinking they're saved because they're baptized.

The stronghold of indifference. Think of that. That's one of the biggest strongholds in children.

It's like they're indifferent. It's like something happens and it doesn't move them. And you're thinking that totally should move them.

Their dog died. They should have woken up and seen death is real. Or their friend died.

They should wake up and see death is real. Indifference is a stronghold. Strongholds out there of Jesus not being God.

I mean, you've got so many cults that want to say that and deny the Trinity, deny the deity of Christ. Any stronghold that isn't Christ as your tower of refuge needs to get torn down. Any emphasis that isn't on Christ needs to get torn down.

Some of you all I know have dealt with the cult in Texas, the Church of Wells. There are strongholds there. I mean, there are strongholds that grew past.

And it's strong. I mean, it's sad. You feel like I've got a biblical argument they're going to listen to me and it's just so slippery and they don't.

And you're just sitting there waging war. Here they have a different spirit. And just like these people have a different spirit, and you're saying to them, I'm afraid for you that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts are led astray from a simple and pure devotion to Christ.

And you're getting this emphasis on works, not Christ. And you sit there just afraid for them. This stuff happens.

You think about arguments. Our enemy, one of them is arguments. Arguments are used to rationalize sin and unbelief and delay repentance.

And Paul says in Colossians, people come with what type of arguments? Plausible arguments. There are arguments that seem reasonable. They seem probable.

They seem believable. For the majority, they hear it. And like Peter, they start to think it's true until Paul comes and rebukes them in Galatians.

And it's so easy, it seems right because this is in the Mosaic Law and maybe we should be doing this, and maybe we should be going back to the Old and reading the Old into the New, rather the New into the Old. Arguments. False teachers argue all the time to take your thoughts away from Christ.

They want it on laws. They want it on rules. They've got it bent towards legalism.

And you've got to notice that. That's a stronghold. That's got to get torn down in someone's life.

They need to be set free from that bondage. Another enemy right there is lofty opinions. Lofty opinions.

In Colossians 2.8, turn there real quick. Colossians 2. Right after Philippians. Lofty opinions.

Let no one disqualify you. Colossians 2.18 Insisting on asceticism, worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, puffed up without reason by a sensuous mind, and not holding fast to the head from whom the whole body nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments grows with a growth that is from God. Again, Paul is showing Christ is the sinner.

But here, lofty opinions of visions. You know what's going to happen to you guys? You will have people come and visit this church. And you know what they're going to want to talk about to you? Their vision.

Their experience. And you know what the approach is? I shouldn't despise prophecy. I shouldn't just say all this is false, but let's test it.

But you know what happens so often? There's such an emphasis on that and you realize that's a stronghold. This person has this lofty opinion of some vision of something they had and they're just going on and on in detail about that vision and you've got to tear that down. Because that thing is making them not a captive to Jesus Christ.

They're captive to an experience. It's like when you ask someone their testimony. When did the Lord save you? And right away, they go to an experience.

Nothing about Christ. Nothing about the cross. It's like I was in my room and I saw Christ.

He appeared to me. And so I know I'm a Christian. Or the whole thing of I got in a car wreck and I didn't die, so God must be on my side and I must be a Christian.

Those are strongholds. Those are lofty opinions. Those are arguments that may seem plausible.

God must be on my side. If you got in a car wreck and didn't die, God is on your side and that He didn't let you die yet in order to lead you to repent. Not to think you're a Christian because He spared your life.

So these are the enemies. These are big guys. Strongholds, lofty opinions, arguments, philosophies out there.

All of them have one thing in common. Their emphasis is not on the Jesus Christ of the Bible. Christ is not the emphasis.

And notice here, verse 5, what we're to do is take captives to obey Christ. So we're getting them away from whatever it is that is not about the Christ of the Bible. And we're bringing them to the Christ of the Scriptures.

Fifth point. How is victory in this war achieved? Okay, here I am in a war campaign. It's like what's the end goal? Where are we going with this battle? How do I know when there's been a victory in this battle? Well, it's when the person's thoughts and understanding of Christ are purified.

It's when they have a right understanding of Christ. Look at the text, verse 5. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God. Why are we doing this? We don't just destroy the stronghold.

Once you take a stronghold, you know what they did in the Old Testament? Sometimes they'd take captives. And so we knock all these strongholds down, and then they come and they see the foolishness of all the strongholds. They've all crumbled.

All their strongholds in their mind have crumbled. And the false professor realizes, I'm lost. I'm not a Christian.

I understand what it means to be born again. I've never been born again. I've been a slave of sexual sin for this many years.

There's no way I'm a Christian. And the young child realizes, there's no way I was a Christian. I've been so self-righteous.

Everything I do is based on getting people's approval. And that stronghold crumbles, and they don't just stand there. You take them as a captive to Christ.

They come to Christ. They have a pure understanding of Christ. They realize that Christ is not, I don't get His favor by my works.

I get it by what He has accomplished. So victory is achieved when these arguments are destroyed, and then we take the person's mind captive to Christ. John Trapp said this, The king of Peritheia was so subdued by the Romans that he made a law that none of his successors should ever wage war with them again.

They were so beaten by the Romans, they made a law, don't ever wage war with them again. You know what we want to happen to people's lofty arguments and opinions that are not according to Christ? We want them to have all of that so destroyed where they realize, I'm never going to war against Christ and His people again. He is Lord.

I'm not going to bow the knee then in force. I'm going to bow the knee now willingly and say that Jesus Christ is Lord. That's victory.

Man's greatest need is to be obedient in how they think about Christ. I mean, how do you think about Christ? Do you think of Christ in a biblical way? That's the most important thing. Not how you think about homeschooling.

Not how you think about even the order in the church and how things are done. How do you think about Christ? It's not your job. It's Christ.

When you set your mind on things above where He is seated, what are you thinking of? Who is Jesus Christ? Well, look at that in the end. Because that's the big thing. If I need to bring captives to Christ, who is Christ? Do I have the Christ of the Bible? Do I know Jesus Christ? So that's man's greatest need.

Sixthly, what are our weapons to fight them with? What are the weapons? Now, let's look at the text. Verse 4. 2 Corinthians 10. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but have divine power to destroy strongholds.

Now, Paul does not specifically say there what they are directly. He doesn't give it as clear as you'd like, you could say. When he says right there, the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, I don't necessarily think his idea is it's not swords and things like that.

What were they suspecting Paul of doing? Ministering in a way according to the flesh. They weren't suspecting Paul as running around with a sword. They were expecting he was dealing with people in the church.

They were accusing him of dealing with the people in the church in a way of human tactics. You know, being too severe, and doing this and doing that. So when Paul comes down here in verse 4 and says the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, I don't think he means we don't use swords and spears and trebuchets.

His point is all those human tactics, we're not doing that. That's not what we do. We are using weapons that have divine power.

Power so strong, it can destroy strongholds. That's an encouragement. But what are these weapons? What are they? He doesn't directly say it there.

Turn a couple pages back. We can maybe get part of this idea in 2 Corinthians 6, 7. Verse 6, he talks about purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love, by truthful speech and the power of God with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left through honor and dishonor, through slander and praise. So here he uses this same idea of weapons and he says of righteousness.

And he just talked about knowledge, patience, kindness, purity. So first, this matters. If I'm in a war, what are my weapons? This is how I want to say it.

First that I get from there is it's a holy life. That's the first thing. Do you have a holy life? Paul says weapons of righteousness.

He just talked about genuine love. Paul lived a life. What did he say in 1 Corinthians 4? He didn't know of anything against himself.

This man realized I am in a war campaign that is so serious that I better make sure I've got no compromise going into war because it could cost me my life. Or it could cost the war. And so Paul says I don't know of anything against myself in 1 Corinthians 4. So first thing you could say is a holy life.

Second thing is preaching the Holy Word. The Word that is set apart. What did Paul say in Ephesians 6 when he was talking about the full armor of God? He says we use the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

And we read in Hebrews 4.12 that the Word of God is sharper than any two-edged sword. And it's able to pierce into the heart. It's able to pierce to the deepest places.

And that's what we need to do when people have strongholds. We've got to get to the deepest place because where's the battlefield? In the mind. How are we going to get in there? We need something that can penetrate it.

We need some sword that the Spirit, when that sword stabs, the Spirit will empower it to make it really count. And that is the Word of God. 1 Peter says we're born again by the living, abiding Word of God.

So a holy life, preaching the Holy Word, aided by the convicting work of the Holy Spirit. If we don't have the Holy Spirit, you can be stabbing that Word all day long. Nothing's going to happen.

People are born again. People are changed when the Spirit of God opens their eyes. As the wind blows where it wishes, you hear its sound.

You don't even know where it comes from. It's like one day you're out in battle with that Baha guy who you think is a hopeless cause. You start to believe that lie.

And you're out there trying to destroy an argument and you know what happens? You say the truth you said ten times and all of a sudden, He looks at you and He says, you're right! I'm wrong! And you're thinking, what happened? What did I do differently? Well, the Spirit of God empowered it. Turn to Romans 15. So, a holy life, preaching the Holy Word, aided by the Holy Spirit in our delivery of the Word.

And then ultimately, the Holy Spirit just saving men, making it real. The next thing, all accomplished through the Holy One, Jesus Christ. Romans 15.

For I will not venture, Paul says, to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me. To do what, Paul? To bring the Gentiles to obedience by word and deed. By the power of signs and wonders.

By the power of the Spirit of God. So that from Jerusalem and all the way around to Eccles. I have fulfilled the ministry of the Gospel of Christ.

That same idea of obedience. Taking every thought captive to obey Christ. Paul says these Romans have been brought to the obedience of the faith.

And how did it happen? All through Christ has accomplished through me. It's something Christ does. What does Paul say in Philippians 2? It is Him who works in me to will and to work for His good pleasure.

We need the Lord. Just like that psalm we read. We're equipped by Him.

The power is supplied by Him. The worst thing you ever want to do is go out and evangelize without relying on the Lord. I did that as a new Christian.

I got so used to evangelizing that I kind of got overconfident. And I went out one day. No real prayer.

No real Lord give me strength. And it was a bunch of powerlessness and God let me see. You can't do anything apart from Me.

And as it's said right there in Romans, the Holy Spirit by the power of the Spirit. So that's the best answer I can give right now on what are the weapons. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God and take every thought captive to obey Christ.

How are we doing that? The weapons of our warfare have divine power. Divine. God.

God is in this. God is in His Word. It is the Word of the Lord.

The Spirit of God. So what does that look like? It looks like me. Say something happens in the next months in this church.

Someone comes and they've got a stronghold of believing that baptism saves you. And somehow they heard about you guys and they saw you guys are zealous for Christ. I'm zealous for Christ.

I want to fellowship with you guys. And you have them here and you ask them when were you saved? And they say, well, I was baptized six years ago. And you think, hmm, that sounded kind of like baptism was his hope of salvation.

What are you going to do? How do you apply this practically to that situation? Well, one, you realize that's a stronghold. This isn't some flippant thing. This is a stronghold.

If I'm in a war going at a stronghold, I'm going to prepare for battle. I'm not just going to go charge up to the big wall and think it's going to fall down. So I'm going to get to praying.

Lord, here this person is coming to our church who believes baptism saves. They've got a stronghold. I'm praying, right? And then I'm looking at my life.

Is there any hypocritical thing that they're going to see in my life? Do I have a holy life of weapons of righteousness in the right hand and the left? Because if I go to them and say, you know what, you're not saved by baptism and they're living an outwardly righteous life, and they look at you and they say, I saw you the other day and you were looking at that woman and lusting at her. They're going to close down and not hear you. So the life is holy.

And then I go to the Holy Word and I find what truths can I bring to thrust at that person to try to tear down that stronghold? And I find some verses and I get them prepared. I understand them. And I've got my arrows.

I've got my sword sharpened. So I'm praying. My life is holy.

I've got weapons of righteousness in the right hand and the left. My life is just full of the goodness of the Lord. I've got these Scriptures.

And then I'm praying. Luke 11, 13. Lord, give me more of the Holy Spirit.

I need the Holy Spirit because Lord, I can deliver these verses and nothing's going to happen. And then I go and I meet with that guy. I give him the verses, relying on the power of God.

I'm seeking to tear down that stronghold through the Word of God, through using these weapons that have divine power. And you know what might happen? That guy, he might look at you and say, you're dead right. Baptism doesn't save.

What must I do to be saved? And that's how it happens in a practical way. So, a couple conclusions. We must realize that any failure to see a stronghold torn down, any failure to see a thought in someone's mind get taken down is not because of a lack of power on God's side.

We don't lack the weapons. Don't ever fall into this understanding that stronghold is so big, there's no weapon that's powerful enough to destroy that stronghold. Paul says we've got weapons that have divine power.

We've got the Word of God. We've got the Spirit of God able to empower that Word. We've got persistent prayer.

And we're able to walk around Jericho and see the walls crumble to the ground. There's not a lack of power. So don't ever fall into unbelief with someone you're dealing with that there's just not enough power from God for that stronghold to get torn down.

Believe God that there is. So any failure is not a lack of power. Another conclusion or something to think about for yourself.

What about my own incorrect thoughts? Someone could say, what about mine? What about my thoughts that need to be taken captive to Christ? What about my lofty opinions that I don't have? Or that I have that I need to get rid of? How do I get rid of them? What do I do? Think for a second. How is Paul tearing down strongholds in Colossians, for example? He wrote Scripture. He preached the truth to them.

So if you want your own strongholds to be torn down, you know what you need to do? Sit under the Word of God. Go read the Bible. Sit under godly preaching.

And guess what will happen? You'll find that stronghold gets torn down. You'll find that lofty opinion gets torn down. That area you've got an overemphasis on that's not biblical and your convictions are too strong.

And you sit under the sound preaching and boom, it falls down. So that's how we take our own thoughts captive. One way.

We sit under the Word of God. And the Word, it pierces us. It destroys those thoughts.

We're also responsible. Colossians 2.8, it says, See to it that no one takes you captive. See to it.

Every one of us needs to see to it that our own thoughts don't get held captive. You know, Kim's son, who's not a Christian, he's 17, you know the stronghold that's keeping him from Christ? He seeks the glory that comes from man. So he can't believe.

That's what John says. You cannot believe if you seek the glory that comes from man. He's got to see that for what it is.

You can take all the scriptural arguments in the world and he can agree with it, but it's like, Lord, we need You to tear this down in a powerful way that he sees what is man in whose nostrils is mere breath? Of what account is he? I'm going to give an account to God. Adam Clarke, he said this, In like manner the doctrines of the Reformation, mighty through God, pulled down, demolished, and brought into captivity the entire papal system, the Catholic Church. And instead of obedience to the Pope, the pretend Vicar of God upon the earth, obedience to Christ, as the sole Almighty Head of the Church, was established particularly in Great Britain where it continues to prevail.

Hallelujah! The Lord God Omnipotent reigneth. So you guys think of that. Do you all believe that what happened over there or what happened here with Jonathan Edwards and Edward Payson and others many years ago, do you all really believe that this expedition you all are a part of, this campaign that you

all are a part of, do you really believe that all those strongholds out there can really be torn down? Do you believe these lofty arguments that people have, they actually can fall and be destroyed and those people actually can become captives of Jesus Christ? In their mind.

If the mind is changed, the life also follows. That's why genuine repentance is always followed by a changed life because it's the work of God. Look at verse 13.

We'll not boast beyond limits, but we'll boast only with regard to the area of influence that God has assigned to us. You all have an area of influence in Portland, Maine. You guys, if you take God at His Word, if you go out there not with your own opinions, but with the Word of God, not with cleverness, not with signs and wonders.

Paul said signs and wonders, but I mean it in the sense that the Greeks seek signs and wonders, but you're going out to preach Christ and Him crucified. If you do that, you will see people converted. God will save people.

And if you pray for wisdom, God will give you wisdom to have the ability in your evangelism to be able to tear down strongholds. He who wins souls is what? Wise. He knows the Word of God.

How can I tear down the stronghold of baptismal regeneration, the stronghold of a false profession, if I don't know the Word of God? If I don't know the knowledge of God? He says here these things are raised against the knowledge of God. These lofty opinions are not according to Scripture. They're not according to who God is.

They're against that. Well, I have to know this in order to counterattack. And so we need to know the Word of God.

If we don't know our Bibles, we're going to have a problem out there in warfare. And then if we know our Bibles and we go out in our own power, we'll have a problem too. We need the Spirit's power to make that sword powerful to convict their hearts, to save them.

So lastly, how are we on time? Have I got 90 minutes or something like that? Who is Jesus Christ? Now you could preach a hundred sermons on that, right? There's a poem that my father-in-law wrote, Bob Jennings, that I appreciate. And it really explains who Jesus Christ is in a quick, brief way. So I'm going to read that.

And even here, ask yourself, even young kids, do you know this is true about Jesus Christ? Do you know this of Christ? Jesus Christ existed as deity, predated eternity, created universally, became humanity, lived perfectly, died substitutionarily, was raised powerfully, appeared convincingly, ascended triumphantly, seated in authority, He rules sovereignly, intercedes effectively, coming again surprisingly, will judge with equity, will banish some to hell with finality, will receive some to heaven wonderfully, commanding all to repent and believe sincerely, forgiving those who do so mercifully. He makes demons tremble, heaven rejoice, He's earth's hope, He's the main object of God's love, the summation of God's plan, the centerpiece of civilization, the key to Bible mysteries, the conqueror of sin, the victor over death, the destroyer of destruction, He's the Savior of the world. That's who Jesus Christ is.

That first part, do I know that Jesus existed as deity? Do I know that He predated eternity? That He wasn't a created being? Do I know that He created universally? It says that. Colossians 1 and Hebrews, it says, Christ created. The Father says of the Son in Hebrews 1, He says, You, O Lord, laid the foundations of the

earth.

The Father says that about the Son. He became humanity. Galatians 4. He was born of a woman under the law, just like us.

We're under the law. Christ came under the law and He kept it perfectly. He lived perfectly.

No sin. He died as our substitute. He was raised from the dead.

He appeared to the disciples. He ascended into heaven. He's seated there now in authority.

He rules sovereignly. He intercedes effectively. And He went on.

That's very brief about who Jesus Christ is. But I'll tell you, that's the captain of our salvation. When we go to war in this expedition, we have Christ seated there at the charge.

In a way, we're kind of the horse and He's riding us. And we're just a means for Him to get His victory done. As Paul said in Romans 15, all that Christ has accomplished through me.

Christ did the accomplishing. Even there, Jesus Christ interceding. To know Christ is interceding for us.

Paul said in 2 Timothy, he said everyone deserted me. Imagine getting deserted by everyone. Everyone in that city deserted Paul.

But you know what he said? But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me so that through me the Gospel may be proclaimed to the Gentiles. And He will deliver me from the lion's mouth and He will deliver me again. That's what we need to tear down the strongholds in people's minds.

We need the Lord standing by us. We need His divine power strengthening us. We need the Holy Spirit influencing our thoughts that we'll even have discernment to know what to say to the specific person and how to word it.

We need the power of God. And we're in a war. It should cause us to all the more pray.

Prayer meetings in a church and praying is no small thing. It's seeking to lay ahold of the power of God. Tim preached it at the conference last year.

Jim Elliott said, Lord, make me dangerous. I mean, we need that. I felt that talking to that Baha'i guy in the airport.

I feel that at times with people in churches that I'll go to. It's like they've got a stronghold. And you want it to get torn down.

Legalism, imposing standards the Bible doesn't. It's like that is such a lofty opinion that seems plausible, but it's not according to Christ. It's not.

That's got to get destroyed. I need the power of God to do it. I need divine weapons.

And we have all of that. We have that right here. Thank God.

He's not left us without equipment for the battle, but He has us in the battle. So that was all I had to share there. And I guess the reason I felt like I should share on this is to encourage you guys.

You are in a campaign. You are. If you're a Christian, you're in a war campaign.

And there are strongholds out there. And God has the power to destroy those that men will come to know Christ. And the only way you'll believe that is if you have faith in God and you follow Him in faith.

It's one thing to agree with this. It's another to put it in the action to go out there and seek to destroy strongholds. I realize in the context, this dealt with people in the church.

But this should be our evangelism. The one thing men need to be captive to and think about is who? Christ. We preach Christ.

God forbid we do anything else, but exalt Jesus Christ. Paul said, I determine to know nothing among you except Christ and Him crucified. That has to be the central message of the church in evangelism and in your life.

It's Christ. It's like Christ is the center. I'm captive to Christ.

If you're captive to Christ, it will be very difficult to get held captive to philosophy and held to these traditions and to let that vision really deceive you. If you're so held captive to Jesus Christ in Whom all the fullness of God dwells bodily, you will find in Him all your sufficiency, all your love. Christ is so sufficient.

If there's one prayer we should all keep praying is, Lord, show me more of Yourself. I want to know Christ more. I mean, I remember the first fellowship conference.

Bob and Charles were... God used Charles and Bob's conversion. And just thinking about Christ loving him, he just got up to preach and he started just bawling like a baby and weeping. There was so much reality.

I mean, the building was just still and there Bob is weeping from the pulpit. And I thought, I wish I could cry like that genuinely. Not some fake emotional thing.

You know why he cried like that genuinely? Because he had a reality of Christ that I did not have and I still don't have. And I want to know who Christ is more. I want to believe Him.

Take Him at His Word. You know, one last thought. He says here they suspected us of walking according to the flesh.

What you all don't want to do as a church is walk according to the flesh, use human schemes, human tactics in your battle. Human tactics can build a church numerically. But when it comes to the test on Judgment Day, a whole lot of that will burn up.

It's better to have a small group of uncompromised believers who are going to have a lot of good works that won't be burned up than to have a really big group of compromised professing believers who are going to have a whole lot burned up on Judgment Day. They were suspecting Him of doing that and He wasn't. People are going to suspect you guys are doing that.

There may be people already who are saying, I think that redeeming grace fellowship, they're kind of doing things in a fleshly way. We accuse them of doing things according to things that are not scriptural. These people are going on there comparing themselves to others.

Fleshly things. Carnal things. Don't do that.

And even when you're accused of doing it, don't let that dishearten you, but press on preaching Christ.

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