

## Introduction

A number of years ago I received an email from the administrator in our Houston office that the test scores had been changed by our instructors for some candidates of an organization. That was a serious charge being levied against the instructor. I asked her if she had discussed this with the manager of the Houston center, and she said that she had spoken to him, and he was not responsive. I immediately called our manager in Houston and discussed the charges that had been brought to my attention. I told him to look into this matter and find out what had transpired. I also told him that I was booking a flight to Houston, and that I would be discussing the matter with the certifying organization, the International Association of Drilling Contractors (IADC). I told him that these were serious charges, and the reputation and credibility of our entire organization was being jeopardized by this matter. The accreditation of our company could be suspended indefinitely, and this could result in the immediate termination of employees. The manager took to heart the serious warning, and gave me a full report and explanation the next day. There was an issue with the spread sheet and a formula and the spreadsheet was not giving the correct values, so the instructor had manually changed the grades to the correct grades. There was not any cheating or inappropriate behavior by the instructor. I contacted the IADC and let them know what our manager had found out. Instead of our reputation being jeopardized, our immediate and transparent actions earned us more credibility with the IADC.

Paul had received a report about what was going on in Corinth. There were some people who had brought serious charges against Paul. They said that he was not a man of his word and could not be trusted to do what he says. They accused him of being selfishly motivated. They accused of him of being a false apostle, who had come up with his own commendation. They accused him of walking in the flesh, or with sinful and worldly passions. They accused him of using his authority for selfish gain and control. They accused him of bold in his letters and wimpy in person. There were probably a group of people that were bringing these charges against Paul. Most scholars believe these were Judaizers, or Jews that were requiring circumcision and other aspects of the law to be followed in order to be saved. This was a problem all throughout Christendom at that time, and it is very likely that this was the case. These people wanted to discredit Paul and his ministry so that they could take control of the church in Corinth. It appears that there was a leader in Corinth that was involved, and Paul addressed this man in the letter of sorrow that he wrote a letter to the Corinthians that is not in the canon of Scripture. Paul sent Titus with the letter, and to help get things straightened out. Paul's letter of sorrow had brought the man to repentance. Paul set up a rendezvous with Titus in Troas to get an update. Titus never showed up in Troas, and they went with their backup plan, to meet in Macedonia. Paul was greatly relieved by the report that he received from Titus. Then, he wrote his fourth letter to the church in Corinth, and what is now called 2 Corinthians. He wrote for them to forgive, comfort, and reaffirm their love to him since he had repented (2 Corinthians 2:7-8). Even though the man had repented, there were more people involved in this evil scheme, and Paul is now planning to go to Corinth.

Our next and final section of this letter covers chapters ten through thirteen, and Paul is boldly defending himself and his apostleship. There is a change in tone in the letter between chapters nine and ten. Even though the apparent leader of this group has repented, the rest of the people involved were still there, and Paul is going to address some of the malicious statements and charges that have been made. Paul urges them to repent so that he does not have to be bold when he comes. Paul is a soldier and he is ready to do battle in Corinth. Paul is giving a word of warning just like I gave to my manager in Houston, "get to the bottom of these things immediately or some bold actions may be necessary to take when I get there."

In our passage today, which I am calling Part 1 of Paul's warning and defense, Paul will address his boldness, and his warfare. Paul did not war according to the flesh, for his weapons of warfare were not of the flesh, but were divinely powerful. Next week, in Part 2, we will look at Paul's authority, and what the Lord gave it to him to do, how people should commend themselves, and at Paul's commendation.

### **Paul's Warning and Defense – Part 1**

1. Paul's Boldness (2 Cor 10:1-2)
2. Paul's Warfare (2 Cor 10:3-6)

(2 Cor 10:1-2) "Now I, Paul, myself urge you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ—I who am meek when face to face with you, but bold toward you when absent! {2} I ask that when I am present I *need* not be bold with the confidence with which I propose to be courageous against some, who regard us as if we walked according to the flesh."

(2 Cor 10:3-6) "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, {4} for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. {5} *We are* destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and *we are* taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, {6} and we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete."

#### **1. Paul's Boldness (2 Cor 10:1-2)**

One of the things that Paul's attackers said was that Paul was meek when face to face, but bold when absent. Paul begins with some sarcasm. According to Merriam-Webster, "sarcasm refers to the use of words that mean the opposite of what you really want to say, especially in order to insult someone, or to show irritation, or just to be funny." Paul is not trying to be funny. He has been viciously attacked and is probably somewhat irritated, and is directing this sharp sarcasm at his accusers. He starts by saying, "Now I, Paul, myself urge you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ." Instead of being bold when absent, he is urging with the meekness and gentleness of Christ, just the opposite of what has been said about him. Then, he sarcastically states what has been said about him, "I who am meek when face to face with you, but bold toward you when absent!"

(2 Cor 10:1) "Now I, Paul, myself urge you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ—I who am meek when face to face with you, but bold toward you when absent!"

Paul asked that when he is present that he need not be bold with the confidence with which he proposed to be courageous against some, who regard us as if we walked according to the flesh. He is addressing those who are slandering him, and he is pleading with them to repent so that he does not have to act boldly when he comes. There are two words for boldness in this passage. The first use of bold is the Greek word, *tharreo* (Strong's G2292), which means bold, confidence, or courage. The second word is *tolmao* (Strong's G5111). The root word is *telos*, which means to reach a point in the distance, or to complete. Strong's says that it is to reach *telos* through the idea of extreme conduct. The NASB translates it as courageous here, while the KJV translates it as bold. Paul has been accused of not being bold, but he is suggesting that he will be extremely bold in confronting his accusers.

(2 Cor 10:2) “I ask that when I am present I *need* not be bold (tharreo) with the confidence with which I propose to be courageous (tolmao) against some, who regard us as if we walked according to the flesh.”

## 2. Paul's Warfare (2 Cor 10:3-6)

How bold is Paul going to be? Paul is talking war. He said that even though he walks in the flesh, he does not war according to the flesh. Paul is talking about be a bold and courageous soldier and going to battle against these people that have attacked him. They need to repent or be ready to go to battle against Paul. Paul would rather be meek when face to face than have to come strongly against them.

Paul's accusers have said that he walks according to the flesh, and he acknowledges that he walks in the flesh, but he uses the term differently. His attackers meant that he was fleshly, carnal, and had selfish motives for what he did. There is nothing further from the truth than these false accusations. Paul was a man who promoted righteousness, purity, and putting to death the deeds of the flesh. Paul said that he had been crucified with Christ and the life he now lives, he lives by faith. Paul had a team of people around him, and he had a transparent ministry. When Paul acknowledged that he walked in the flesh, he simply meant that he was human and was living out his life on earth. Paul brings up their charge in sarcasm, but he also does it to transition to his next point, his warfare. Paul said, “for though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh.”

(2 Cor 10:3) “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh,”

(Ga 2:20) “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.”

This passage is widely used in teachings about spiritual warfare. There are lots of truths that we can apply in our lives. First, spiritual warfare is real. Just because we receive Christ into our lives, that does not mean that there is an absence of spiritual warfare. All of us are need to be taught and equipped in the area of spiritual warfare. The Greek word is *strateia*, which means warfare. It is a derivative of *stratos*, which means an army. You are and I are soldiers in the Lord's army, and we are all involved in spiritual warfare.

In 2 Timothy 4:6-7, Paul is nearing the end of his life and he said that the time of his departure has come. In looking back at his life and ministry, he said, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith.” Our Christian life is a fight, and we need to know about spiritual warfare so we can fight a good fight.

(2 Ti 4:6-7) “For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. {7} I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith;”

In his letter to Timothy, he urged him to be a good soldier of Christ Jesus and to suffer hardship with him. Then he told Timothy not to entangle himself in the affairs of everyday life so that he could please the one who enlisted him as a soldier, and that person is the Lord. It is not just Paul and Timothy who are soldiers; we are all soldiers, and we need to know the weapons of our warfare.

(2 Ti 2:3–4) “Suffer hardship with *me*, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. {4} No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier.”

There is some warfare that we are aware of and some that we are not. When Daniel prayed for understanding about the seventy weeks, the Lord sent the angel, Gabriel, to him with an answer. Gabriel did not show up for twenty-one days, because he was held up by the prince of Persia, a demon. Michael, one of the chief princes (angels) came to help him, and that allowed him to go to Daniel. Daniel was in Persia, so there were demonic forces assigned to geographical regions. There were battles going on in the spiritual realm that we do not see, but they are still taking place. The kingdom of darkness has levels of authority or ranks, as does the kingdom of God. It does not appear from the text that Daniel was aware of, or actively involved in what was going on in the warfare among the angels of God and the demons.

(Da 10:12–14) “Then he said to me, “Do not be afraid, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart on understanding *this* and on humbling yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to your words. {13} “But the prince of the kingdom of Persia was withstanding me for twenty-one days; then behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left there with the kings of Persia. {14} “Now I have come to give you an understanding of what will happen to your people in the latter days, for the vision pertains to the days yet *future*.”

There are demons here on earth, spiritual forces of darkness, and we do get involved in some of these battles. In Acts 16, Paul was being greatly annoyed by a spirit of divination in a slave-girl. He turned to her and commanded the spirit to come out of her in the name of Jesus, and it came out at that very moment. There are some teachers today who say that believers are never commanded to speak to demonic spirits and command them to do anything. Paul spoke to this demonic spirit, and he commanded it to come out of her, and it came out. As believers, we have been given authority over demons. Greater is He who is in us than he who is in the world.

(Ac 16:16–18) “It happened that as we were going to the place of prayer, a slave-girl having a spirit of divination met us, who was bringing her masters much profit by fortune-telling. {17} Following after Paul and us, she kept crying out, saying, “These men are bond-servants of the Most High God, who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation.” {18} She continued doing this for many days. But Paul was greatly annoyed, and turned and said to the spirit, “I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!” And it came out at that very moment.”

When Jesus sent out the twelve apostles in Luke 9, He gave them power and authority over all the demons and to heal diseases, and He sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to perform healing. If Christians were not supposed to be involved in casting out demons, Jesus would not have given authority to the apostles and sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to perform healing.

(Lk 9:1–2) “And He called the twelve together, and gave them power and authority over all the demons and to heal diseases. {2} And He sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to perform healing.”

In the Great Commission recorded in Mark 16, Jesus commanded all of us to go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. Then He said, “These signs will accompany those

who have believed: in My name they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues; they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.” One of the signs of those who have believed, and that would include you and me, is that they will cast out demons.

(Mk 16:15–18) “And He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. {16} “He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned. {17} “These signs will accompany those who have believed: in My name they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues; {18} they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly *poison*, it will not hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.”

I believe that while God has given all of us authority over demons, that will not be the specific calling of all believers. My primary gifting is teaching, and I spend a lot of time studying and teaching the word of God. That is one of the things that God has called me to do. I do not go out looking for demons to cast out; I spend time worshiping the Lord, studying the word, and teaching. Because God called me to plant churches, I also spend time evangelizing and inviting people, laying foundations in churches, and training and raising up leaders. If in those activities God reveals to me a demonic force, then I will deal with it as the Lord directs.

One Monday I was working in my office in Orlando and a man from the golf course maintenance crew came in to see me. He said he was being chased. I was fasting that day, and was very alert to the things of the spirit, and the Holy Spirit told me that he was being chased by a demonic force. My friend, Joe Warner, is a prophet and gets very involved in helping people get set free, and I called to make an appointment for this young man and I to come in. We scheduled it for Wednesday afternoon. I did not sense it was the right time or place to deal with this, and it is also usually better to work in teams. Unfortunately, Wednesday never came for this young man. He jumped off the balcony of a hotel and fell to his death. He was still being chased. This led me to believe that it is not enough for the Lord to reveal these things, we must seek the Lord about what our immediate actions should be. In Acts 16, the slave-girl with a spirit of divination followed after Paul for several days before he cast it out. The young man that came to me did not have several days. We need to seek the Lord for His leading in these situations.

Paul said that we do not war according to the flesh. That means our weapons are not of the flesh. In the flesh, we wage war with many different means. We wage economic wars with sanctions. The western world has brought economic sanctions against Iran and Russia. We wage propaganda wars, where countries put out their own narratives of events trying to change the minds of people. We wage wars with missiles, bombs, grenades, and all kinds of physical weapons. Paul makes it clear that the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh. While they may not be of the flesh, they are divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. The King James Version translates it as strongholds. The Greek word is *ochuroma* (Strong's G3794), which means a stronghold, fortification, or fortress. The Corinthians knew what physical strongholds were. Above the city of Corinth was a mountain, and on that mountain stood the Acropolis, which was a fortress. It had huge walls around it that were impenetrable. If the city was under attack, the people of Corinth would go to the fortress, where they would be safe. Many fortresses had moats around them, but not all of them. They usually had some towers where people could go and scout what was going on. Paul was not talking about a physical fortress, but a spiritual fortress.

(2 Cor 10:4) “for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.”

What is a spiritual fortress or stronghold? There are a host of different definitions for this term. In the next verse Paul said that we are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. A stronghold could then be defined as any speculation, thought, or reasoning that is contrary to God's word that has been built into our minds and life. A stronghold would be a thought, idea, custom, or speculation that a person or people are holding onto that is contrary to truth. Cindy Jacobs defined stronghold as “a fortified place that Satan builds to exalt himself against the knowledge and plans of God.”<sup>1</sup> Many scholars categorize strongholds into different types. Garry Kinnaman describes personal strongholds “as things that Satan builds to influence one's personal life: personal sin, thoughts, feelings, attitudes and behavior patterns.”<sup>2</sup> Ed Silvoso defined a stronghold as “a mind set impregnated with hopelessness that causes the believer to accept as unchangeable something that he or she knows is contrary to the will of God.”<sup>3</sup> Other types of strongholds mentioned by Cindy Jacobs are ideological strongholds, occultic strongholds, social strongholds, geographical strongholds, sectarian strongholds, and iniquities (sins of the fathers passed down generationally).

(2 Cor 10:5) “*We are* destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and *we are* taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ,”

You cannot destroy a stronghold in belief, attitude, or mindset by gunning it down with a machine gun. You cannot blowup a stronghold with a grenade or a bomb. You cannot shoot them down with a bow and arrow. You cannot use weapons of the flesh against these spiritual stronghold or fortresses. You must use spiritual weapons that are divinely powerful for the destruction of these fortresses.

Paul said “we are destroying speculations” and “taking every thought captive.” The word for destroying is *kathaireo*, which means to take down, pull down, cast down, or destroy. He gives a word picture of this fortress being torn down. The walls and structure of this stronghold are being pulled down and destroyed. Every enemy soldier has been defeated and is being taken captive. These speculations, false doctrines, false beliefs and ideologies are going to be brought down, destroyed, and taken captive to the obedience of Christ. Those that have brought in false charges against Paul, and are bringing false doctrine into the church of Corinth are going to be brought down, and brought into submission to Christ.

What are these spiritual weapons? Paul does not give a list of these weapons in the text, but he does mention one very important weapon: truth. He said that we are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God. The Word of God is the knowledge of God and it is how we know about God and His principles. Truth is something that will bring down strongholds.

In Ephesians 6:10-20, Paul wrote about the armor of God that we are to use to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. He said that our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of

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<sup>1</sup> Breaking Strongholds in Your City, C. Peter Wagner, Chapter 3, page 80

<sup>2</sup> Breaking Strongholds in Your City, C. Peter Wagner, Chapter 3, page 82

<sup>3</sup> Breaking Strongholds in Your City, C. Peter Wagner, Chapter 3, page 83

wickedness in the heavenly places. This helps us understand strongholds. These thought patterns and beliefs that a person or people have in their minds have come from spiritual forces of darkness. The devil has an evil administration of spiritual forces of wickedness, and they sow these evil thoughts, which are against God and His ways, into the minds of people. When people act upon these ideas they become strongholds. In the physical fortresses the walls kept the enemies out, but at the same time, they kept people inside them from getting out. When enemies were captured, they were put into cells inside these fortresses, and they remained imprisoned with no way of escape. The same is true with spiritual strongholds. People get imprisoned by their beliefs and ideologies, and they feel they cannot escape.

(Eph 6:10–11) “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. {11} Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. {12} For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual *forces* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*.”

Paul goes on to mention the armor and weapons. We are to gird our loins with truth. Truth protects you and I. Next, we are to put on the breastplate of righteousness. Living righteously is also a protection from falling prey to the enemy. Jesus is truth and Jesus is our righteousness. Next, we are to shod our feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace. The gospel protects our feet, but it is also a powerful weapon. In Romans 1:16, Paul wrote that it is “the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.” The gospel can set prisoners free that have been locked up in strongholds.

(Eph 6:13-15) “Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. {14} Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, {15} and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace;”

(Ro 1:16) “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.”

Next, Paul mentions the shield of faith, which can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. The shield is primarily defensive, used to block swords, spears, and arrows. It occasionally can be used as a weapon to knock down opponents in close combat. Next, Paul mentions the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Since we are in a spiritual war, we must be protected, and our salvation is the key to protecting our heads and minds. When we place our faith in Christ, receive Him into our lives, and confess Him as our Lord, we receive the helmet of salvation. The sword of the Spirit is both defensive and offensive. We can deflect the enemy attacks, and we can also strike the enemy. The sword is the Word of God. It is the primary weapon that we use to bring down strongholds, false ideologies, opinions, speculations, doctrines of demons, and things raised up against the knowledge of God.

(Eph 6:16-17) “in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil *one*. {17} And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”

When I identified areas of my life where I struggled, I would find passages of Scripture that dealt with that subject, and memorize them. I would not just memorize them, but I would meditate on those passages. In John 8:31-32, Jesus said, “If you continue (or abide) in My word, then you are

truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.” The word of God is a powerful weapon and sets us free. It pulls down wrong thinking, speculations, and spiritual strongholds. Later on, when people would ask me about anxiety, patience, or other topics, I was able to provide wise counsel and give them specific Scriptures that had helped me.

(Jn 8:31–32) “So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, “If you continue in My word, *then* you are truly disciples of Mine; {32} and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.”

When Jesus was facing the temptations of the devil in the wilderness, He always replied with scriptures. When offered food, He quoted Deuteronomy 8:3, “Man shall not live on bread alone.” When offered the kingdoms of the world, He responded with Deuteronomy 6:13, “You shall worship the Lord your God and serve Him only” When challenged to throw Himself down and let the angels guard and bear Him up, Jesus responded out of Deuteronomy 6:16, “You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.” The pastor of one of the largest churches in America said that we do not need to use the Old Testament. Jesus used the Old Testament in His defense against the devil. He used the Old Testament to explain Himself on the road to Emmaus. Our sword of the Spirit, the word of God, contains both the Old Testament and the New Testament. We need the whole counsel of God in our spiritual warfare.

(Lk 4:3–12) “And the devil said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.” {4} And Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live on bread alone.’” {5} And he led Him up and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. {6} And the devil said to Him, “I will give You all this domain and its glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. {7} “Therefore if You worship before me, it shall all be Yours.” {8} Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God and serve Him only.’” {9} And he led Him to Jerusalem and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here; {10} for it is written, ‘He will command His angels concerning You to guard You,’ {11} and, ‘On *their* hands they will bear You up, so that You will not strike Your foot against a stone.’” {12} And Jesus answered and said to him, “It is said, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’”

The last weapon mentioned in Ephesians six is prayer. Paul said that we are to pray and petition at all times. Our prayers and petitions are divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are to pray at all times, and we are to pray about all things. God wants us to be pray with alertness. As believers, we need to be alert and know what is going on around us, in lives, families, cities, states, country, and world. We need to be alert to what the Holy Spirit is speaking to us.

(Eph 6:18-20) “With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, {19} and *pray* on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, {20} for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in *proclaiming* it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.”

One day I was praying for a man in our congregation that had been diagnosed with Stage 3 cancer. The Holy Spirit told me to pray for him, and then He told me exactly how I was to pray. The next day I prayed for the man, and rebuked the cancer, per the instructions that the Lord had given me. I told Karen that they were not going to find any more cancer in that man because the



Lord had healed him. The man went in for testing the very next day, and they could not find a trace of cancer in his body. We have to pray, and we have to be alert as we pray.

As a pastor, I pray about messages every week. I pray about what books of the Bible to teach every year. I look at the needs of the congregation and pray about what truths in God's word will be most beneficial to their growth and maturity in the Lord. I have to be alert so that I know how to pray and to receive answers from the Lord.

How do we pray with alertness? That is very different for everyone, but there are some common principles. Find a place that where you are not distracted. Jesus went to a deserted or lonely place and was praying. It was lonely and also quiet. Find a time that works best for you. Jesus got up early and prayed. I like to pray early in the morning. I am fresh and most alert in the morning. I am least alert and tired in the evenings, so that is not a great time for me. For many of you who are not morning people, the evenings may be a great time for you. For a nursing mother, nap time for the baby may be the best time you have to read the word, or to pray. Find a place and time that works for you. We want to minimize things that hinder us from being alert. It helps to have a focus in your prayer time. Every week Karen has a different focus for our corporate prayer. It is easier to stay alert and focused when you have something to focus on. When Karen and I pray together in the morning, I try to find a particular attribute or characteristic of God for us to focus our praise on. We also have other items, like a health issue or other need, that we can focus on. Using a prayer guide can be very helpful. To some, it makes prayer seem more legalistic and canned, but for others, it helps to stay alert and focused.

I like to pray scripture. In corporate or private times, I like to pray scripture. I find one or more scriptures that pertains to what I am praying about and pray those verses. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you specific scriptures to pray. When a certain word or thought comes to mind, think of a verse that contains that word or thought. Use a concordance to help you if necessary.

Another spiritual weapon that is closely associated with prayer is fasting. When Jesus was dealing with the temptations of the devil, He was on a forty-day fast. There are different types of fasts. There are complete fasts, which are without food or water for a specified period. There are normal fasts, which are without food, but still have water. Some people say that there are partial fasts, which eliminate only certain types of foods. Personally, I do not call those fasts; I say that those are selective diets. To fast means to abstain from food, and they are still eating food. Fasts differ in length. Some are for a meal. Some fasts are for a day. Some fasts are for three days. When Jonah preached at Nineveh, the king proclaimed a three day fast from food and water. Some fasts are for a week, ten days, two weeks, or up to forty days.

When I was a club professional, the owner of the club was greedy; that was a stronghold. I fasted while I worked there, and the owner began to spend money improving the course. The manager of his office building asked me one day why he would spend money at the course, but not at the office. The reason was obvious to me; I had been pulling down the stronghold by my prayers and fasting.

Paul said that "we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete." Paul needs the help of the Corinthians. To single out some that are being disobedient is not effective unless the rest of the church is willing to be obedient. When the church is obedient, then those who are being disobedient can be punished. Paul is a strong and bold soldier, but he needs the church to get behind him.

(2 Cor 10:6) “and we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete.”

### **Conclusion and Applications**

Paul has started the last section of this letter to the Corinthians, and it has a very different tone, a militant tone. He is ready to do battle with those who have been attacking him, his ministry, and the gospel message. He is giving a warning to them to shape up or he is going to be a bold and courageous soldier and bring down these false allegations and teachings. He would rather come in meekness and gentleness, but he is prepared to come in as a warrior. Even though Paul walks according to the flesh, he does not war according to the flesh. The weapons of his warfare are divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. These lofty thoughts and speculations are going to come down. Everything raised up against the knowledge of God is going to be brought down and taken captive.

You and I are in a spiritual battle. We are facing an onslaught of false religions, beliefs, ideologies, and teachings. Here are just a few of the issues that we are currently facing in our country, and unfortunately, in the church also:

- Abortion
- Homosexuality
- Fornication
- Adultery
- Pornography
- Witchcraft
- Humanism
- Transgenderism

These things cannot be destroyed with fleshly weapons. They must be destroyed and taken captive with divinely powerful weapons. They must be brought down with truth, prayer, fasting, and faith. They must be brought down by the church, the pillar and the support of truth. We are the truth, and we must be good soldiers of Christ, and fight a good fight. This is not the time for the church to be asleep. It is time for the church to wake up and be alert, and to fight, using divinely powerful weapons.

### **Closing Prayer**

Father God, thank you for this passage about spiritual warfare. We want to be good soldiers and fight a good fight. Give us wisdom about the battles that we are to fight. Give us understanding of the times that we are in. Give us the right strategies and battle plans, and the part that each of us is to do. Help us to put on our spiritual armor. Help us to learn to use our weapons effectively, and to avail much. Help us to gird our loins with the belt of truth. Help us to take up the sword of the spirit and use it against the false teachings, reasonings, and ideologies that are prevalent today. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

