



## PART 2

# PAUL IN CORINTH:

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## LEADERSHIP

## UNDER FIRE

### Chapter Nine

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## THE LEADER'S WARFARE

### HIS BOLDNESS

**LEADERSHIP PRINCIPLE #21**  
**A LEADER IS COURAGEOUS**

### HIS MILITANCY

Thus, Paul's rising intensity finally culminated in an all-out declaration of war. The leader's compassion doesn't cancel out his willingness to fight. His courage is equal to his passion.

Paul's enemies had accused him of walking "according to the flesh" ([2 Corinthians 10:2](#))—in a fleshly manner.

[2 Corinthians 10:2 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>2</sup> "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.**"

He flatly and forcefully denied the accusation that he was morally corrupt. He also threatened to display his boldness against anyone who impugned his character in that way.

Nonetheless, in [verse 3](#), he acknowledged that there was a *true* sense in which he "walk[ed] in the flesh"—he was, after all, a mortal, made of human flesh.

**2 Corinthians 10:3 (NASB)**

<sup>3</sup>“For though **we walk in the flesh**, we do not war according to the flesh.”

He was making a play on words. He still denied, of course, that he walked “**according to the flesh**” in the moral sense. But he also admitted that he was still “**in the flesh**” in the human sense. **In other words, he wasn’t claiming to be supernatural.**

And yet he was prepared to wage war in the supernatural realm. He said,

**2 Corinthians 10:3-5 (NASB)**

<sup>3</sup>“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh,  
<sup>4</sup>for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful  
 for the destruction of fortresses.

<sup>5</sup>*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.”

This is an amazingly bold challenge to the enemies of truth. In effect, Paul was saying, “**You want to go to war with me? Throw down. But let me warn you, when you look at me, all you see is a mortal man. But when we go to battle, I won’t be using human weapons. I won’t fight on your level. I won’t use conventional human weapons.**” It was war on another plane. Paul fought “**by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left**” (**2 Corinthians 6:7**).

**2 Corinthians 6:7 (NASB)**

<sup>7</sup>“**In the word of truth, in the power of God; by the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and the left.**”

Paul knew the real battle was not merely against the human false teachers who had confused the Corinthians. It was nothing less than full-scale war against the kingdom of darkness.

**Ephesians 6:12 (NASB)**

<sup>12</sup>“**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.**”

We are fighting for the preservation and proclamation of the *truth*. We are fighting for the honor of Jesus Christ. We are fighting for the salvation of sinners, and we are fighting for the virtue of saints.

In fact, for every good and noble effort of Christian leaders in business, politics, education, the military, or any other legitimate pursuit, there is inevitable engagement with the kingdom of darkness. Since all Christians, in whatever they do, are supposed to be engaged in the advance of Christ’s kingdom, they face opposition from the powers of evil.

Paul used the language of warfare all the time. He began and ended **1 Timothy** by urging Timothy to fight the battle well: “**Wage the good warfare**” (**1:18**);



**1 Timothy 1:18 (NASB)**

<sup>18</sup>“This command I entrust to you, Timothy, *my son*, in accordance with the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them **you fight the good fight.**”

“Fight the good fight of faith” (6:12).

**1 Timothy 6:12 (NASB)**

<sup>12</sup>“**Fight the good fight of faith;** take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.”

He said,

**1 Thessalonians 5:8 (NASB)**

<sup>8</sup>“But since we are of *the day*, **let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation.**”

In **2 Timothy 2:3** he said,

**2 Timothy 2:3 (NASB)**

<sup>3</sup>“Suffer [endure] hardship with *me*, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.”

As Paul, himself neared the end of his own life, he wrote,

**2 Timothy 4:7 (NASB)**

<sup>7</sup>“**I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith.**”

His whole life was a spiritual war against anything and everything that opposed the truth.

You cannot fight on that level with human weapons. Carnal tools have no power whatsoever against the kingdom of darkness. The most powerful human arsenal is totally impotent against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, or against spiritual wickedness in the heavenlies. Fleshly instruments can't fight on that level. Human weapons have no power at all against Satan. They cannot liberate souls from the kingdom of darkness. They cannot transform sinners. They cannot sanctify saints. They have no effect in the spiritual realm or the kingdom of darkness.

What did Paul mean by “**carnal**” weapons? Obviously, he would include every instrument used in literal human warfare. Paul wasn't literally planning an incursion with swords and chariots into the camp of the enemy. He wasn't actually thinking of using physical force in Corinth.

But a moment's reflection will reveal that every type of worldly device and human invention that has ever been brought into battle against the powers of darkness is also merely a different kind of fleshly weapon. That would include human philosophy, rationalistic arguments, carnal strategy, fleshly ingenuity, human cleverness, entertainment, showmanship, and every other innovation that is supposed to augment the power of the gospel. Such strategies are in full



fashion these days. But all of them are impotent weapons. They represent vain attempts to fight spiritual battles on a human level.

You can use such gimmicks to sell soup and Chevrolets. You can employ them in political campaigns or for public-relations purposes. But in spiritual warfare they are utterly useless. They're like plastic popguns with Ping-Pong balls.

They can never be truly effective against the fortresses of the evil one. Even if your job is to sell cars or food products, if you are a Christian, you are a soldier in a spiritual battle, and for that battle, you need to be skilled in the use of the right weapons.

Paul said the weapons he took to battle were **“mighty in God” (KJV) (2 Corinthians 10:4); “divinely powerful” (NASB).**

**2 Corinthians 10:4 (KJV)**

**4“(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)”**

**2 Corinthians 10:4 (NASB)**

**4“For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.”**

He was saying these were weapons that came from heaven—from God’s own personal arsenal. He certainly was not talking about gimmicks and novelties designed to make his message more marketable. What Paul had in mind were clearly not weapons of human invention, but divinely ordained, spiritually powerful weapons.

Why? Because the enemy is formidable and, frankly, gimmicks and human cleverness won’t do what needs to be done. We need divinely powerful weapons **“for pulling down strongholds” (v. 4)**. The spiritual fortresses Paul was describing are impervious to fleshly weapons.

The Corinthians would have had a clear picture in their minds when Paul mentioned **“strongholds or destruction of fortresses.”** Just to the south of their city and towering over it was a massive mountain, a natural tower of rock more than eighteen hundred feet high, known as Acrocorinthus. On it stood an impregnable fortress, flanked by the Temple of Aphrodite. From that elevated citadel, the acropolis of Athens was visible more than forty-five miles away.

The fortress atop Acrocorinthus was where the entire population of Corinth would retreat in case of an attack. From there they could easily defend themselves. They knew the strategic value of that fortress. It was a massive, high bulwark that could not easily be overthrown. In fact, it still towers over the ruins of Corinth today.

Paul said the spiritual strongholds of the powers of darkness are similar to that—except they are spiritual and supernatural. Such fortifications obviously cannot be assaulted with worldly weapons.



Notice also that Paul's strategy was not merely to lob a few shots at the fortresses, but to demolish them. The expression **"pulling down strongholds"** speaks of utterly bringing them to ruin, causing them to crumble and disintegrate.

What are these fortresses? What, actually, was Paul attacking? He gave the answer very clearly in [verse 5](#): **"Casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God."**

**2 Corinthians 10:5 (KJV)**

<sup>5</sup>**"Casting down imaginations [*logismos*], and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."**

**2 Corinthians 10:5 (NASB)**

<sup>5</sup>**"*We are* destroying speculations [*logismos*] and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and *we are* taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ."**