

The Weapons of our Warfare

1) Meekness

'For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ...'

(2 Cor.10:3-6)

- ✓ **Paul planted the church at Corinth. He heard that there were problems so he wrote 1 Corinthians**
- ✓ **Many rebelled against his authority and teaching. So he paid a painful visit to them in which he rebuked them**
- ✓ **Most, but not all, repented. So he wrote this letter, 2 Corinthians**
- ✓ **Why were they not receptive to Paul?**
- ✓ **His physical appearance was unimpressive and they came under the influence of the more grandiose, spectacular false apostles**

✓ They were attracted to these 'super apostles', who big-noted themselves. *'For I consider that I am not at all inferior to the most eminent apostles'* (2 Cor.11:7)
huper = super or superior

✓ These leaders were carnal people with inflated egos, and an exaggerated sense of their own importance

✓ Their 'weapons' looked impressive, but were carnal

✓ These included:

1)They focused on outward appearance
***'Do you look at things according to the outward appearance?'* (2 Cor.10:7)**

Paul's outward appearance was unimpressive

This is a description of him from an early Christian writing:

'A man of small stature, with a bald head and crooked legs, in a good state of body, with eyebrows meeting and nose somewhat hooked'

This is what *they* said about him:

“For his letters,” they say, “are weighty and powerful, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible”

(2 Cor.10:10)

In contrast, the ‘super apostles’ did all they could to appear sharp, powerful and on the cutting edge

2) Their measuring stick was their mutual commendations instead of the standard of the example of Jesus and the apostolic pattern

'For we dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves. But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise'

(2 Cor.10:12)

They were a back-slapping, mutual-admiration society. They paraded their apparent successes, congratulating one another and competing with one another on the basis of their measuring stick

✓ **It is a common trait of cults, and a dangerous trend of denominations to set aside God's measuring stick and replace it with in-house standards, which soon are perceived as being Biblical**

✓ **He tells them that their value system by which they estimated people was warped (i.e. according to the flesh). They learned their ways of flashiness from the world**

✓ **Paul said that though he lived in the flesh (humanity), he did not walk according to the flesh or the way of the world**

3) They intruded into the ministry of Paul

'We, however, will not boast beyond measure, but within the limits of the sphere which God appointed us—a sphere which especially includes you. For we are not overextending ourselves (as though our authority did not extend to you), for it was to you that we came with the gospel of Christ; not boasting of things beyond measure, that is, in other men's labors, but having hope, that as your faith is increased, we shall be greatly enlarged by you in our sphere, to preach the gospel in the regions beyond you, and not to boast in another man's sphere of accomplishment'

(2 Cor.10:13-16)

✓They came to the church after Paul established it and assumed authority over it

✓Even today, some force their way into churches, simply by calling themselves apostles

✓False teachers never lead people to salvation in Christ. Instead they prey on the converts of others and immature believers

4) They controlled the church through authoritarianism

'For you put up with it if one brings you into bondage, if one devours you, if one takes from you, if one exalts himself, if one strikes you on the face' (2 Cor.11:20)

Their spiritual abuse had bad consequences. Eg:

- 1) Bondage: They acted as tyrants over God's people, bringing them into bondage to themselves. They were taken captive like a hunter takes his prey. They even struck them with their hands**
- 2) Control: There is a difference between righteous authority and unrighteous authoritarianism:**



- ✓ **Righteous authority is characterized by voluntary submission to loving leadership**
- ✓ **Authoritarianism is the corruption of authority. It is an attempt to usurp control over another person's life by demanding unquestioned submission**
- ✓ **Those who seek to control do so either through intimidation or manipulation. Intimidation uses direct means of control. Manipulation uses indirect means of control**

3) They 'devoured' them financially. Matt.23:14



These were their 'weapons'

***Project an image of success**

***build an in-house culture which becomes the measuring stick**

***draw disciples to themselves from other ministries**

***authoritarianism**

These 'weapons' exalt themselves against the knowledge of Christ. It is the world's way of thinking and doing

□ Paul was regarded as 'weak' because he didn't behave like this

'To our shame I say that we were too weak for that!'
(2 Cor.11:21)

We are to pull down these strongholds by bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ

This is what Paul did

He had real spiritual weapons

1) He was not focused on outward appearance, but on truth

'Even though I am untrained in speech, yet I am not in knowledge'

(2 Cor.11:7)

*'But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he who comes preaches **another Jesus** whom we have not preached, or if you receive a **different spirit** which you have not received, or a **different gospel** which you have not accepted—you may well put up with it!'*

(2 Cor.11:3-4)

Their 'super apostles' were false apostles

'For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works' (2 Cor.11:13-15)

In his first epistle to the Corinthians Paul warned that wood, hay and stubble ministry would be burned up

2) He used God's measuring stick

'For not he who commends himself is approved, but whom the Lord commends' (2 Cor.10:18)

Paul used the measuring stick of Christ's own example

'Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross'

(Phil.2:6-8)

3) He ran in his own lane

He didn't intrude into another person's ministry; nor build on another man's foundation

The apostles were in general agreement about their sphere of ministry - Gal.2:9

Paul was sent to Corinth by the Lord Himself and planted this church

'Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord? If I am not an apostle to others, yet doubtless I am to you. For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord'

(1 Cor.9:1-2)

4) He was meek and gentle

'Now I, Paul, myself am pleading with you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ'

(2 Cor.10:1)

He didn't command, manipulate or control

He beseeched, pleaded and appealed to those he ministered to

He influenced others by:

- *a servant heart**
- *a gentle spirit**
- *an exemplary life**

He didn't covet their money or financially devour their homes. He even waived his right to be supported financially as an apostle, (1 Cor.9:4-15)

'...when I was present with you, and in need, I was a burden to no one, for what I lacked the brethren who came from Macedonia supplied. And in everything I kept myself from being burdensome to you, and so I will keep myself'

(2 Cor.11:9)

He asks, 'did I commit an offence in this?'

**These were his weapons of warfare...and they
are ours**

***Focus on truth, rather than outward
appearance**

***seek God's approval not man's**

***run in the lane God has placed you in**

***minister in humility, gentleness and
meekness**