



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

2 Corinthians 10: 1-6

“War”

TRANSCRIPT

We’re turning to a new section of 2 Corinthians -- the final section actually -- chapters 10 through 13. And for those of you who have been following along and reading in 2 Corinthians some, as we have been attempting to expound the book; you of course, notice immediately, the change that takes place with chapter 10, verse 1. There are three great subjects in this book. The ministry, Christian giving -- or Christian stewardship -- and then, the apostolic authority of the Apostle Paul. And so, these are the topics. This is the third. We’re going to read verse 1 through verse 6 for the Scripture reading today. Beginning with verse 1 the apostle says, “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.”

Now, you might be puzzled by that; because that seems a very strange thing for someone to say. “I who am meek when face to face with you, but bold toward you when absent.” The reason that this is strange is that, the apostle is most likely repeating ironically, criticism that has been given of him. That is, that when he is in their present; presence, he is meek. He’s humble. But when he gets off by himself and starts writing letters to us, then his words have a touch of acid to them.

Now, the apostle may have brought on some of that himself because he had already written them, the first letter to the Corinthians -- actually, we’ve said that 2 Corinthians is really the fourth letter that he has written them -- but in the passage that we know as 1 Corinthians, he had said, “I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling.” So his enemies, within the body of the professing believers had picked up on that and said, “Yes. He says he’s weak and humble, but he writes us these stinging letters.” So the apostle is no doubt, referring to that when he says, “I who am meek when face to face with you, but bold toward you when absent.” He continues, “I ask that, when I am present, I may 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.”

Now, if you are a careful reader, you will notice immediately, that little word “some” let’s you know that those are the ones who probably have said, “He’s meek and humble when we’re talking to him when he’s in our midst, but he’s far different when he writes us those letters. For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh.” One might expect that the apostle would write, “We do not walk according to the flesh,” -- which would have been true, but he raises the tempo a bit and changes “walk” to “war.” “For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying the speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.” And now the final word. “And we are ready to punish all disobedience whenever your obedience is complete.”

It’s quite a challenge to take a look at a passage like this and then expound it in a way that will illuminate -- not only the words of the apostle -- but bring into clarity, the things about which Paul has speaking; is speaking and make application to our day. May the Lord bless this reading of his word and let’s bow together in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Our heavenly Father, we thank Thee for men such as the apostle, gifted by God the Holy Spirit, appointed by the Lord Jesus Christ himself, to defend the faith and to hand it on to others in order that they too may hand it on down through the centuries to us.

We thank Thee for the faithfulness of the apostle, faithfulness to the Lord, faithfulness to the commission, and faithfulness to us, as an intermediary in all that thou art doing for those who, by Thy grace, have come to know Thee. We thank Thee for the ministry of the apostle and specifically, for these words that he wrote to the Corinthians because we need them as well. Enable us to remember the pre-imminent place that the apostolic teaching has in the ministry of the word of God and in the church of Jesus Christ. Help us Lord, to be faithful to it, responsive to it and obedient to it as well.

We know that by Thy grace as we study, as we listen to the illumination of the Holy Spirit, as he gives us insight into the word of God, that we are being led into the truth. We are so grateful that the truth of the Scriptures emerges as the Holy Spirit, taking the things of Christ shows them unto us. May today, our experience, be that. We thank Thee for the Christian church and today Lord, we pray Thy blessing upon each of the members of it. Upon their meetings today and upon their life through the days of this week that is before us.

We thank Thee for the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and for the power of that word. Help us to remember, that it is by the word of God that men are brought to the knowledge of Christ and delivered from their sins. Father, we pray for this local church and for its leadership, for its elders and deacons, for the members and friends and again, especially for visitors who may be here today. May Lord, through the Holy Spirit, great blessing come to all of us together.

We pray for the sick, and for the troubled, and for the perplexed, and for those who’ve requested prayers for particular reasons. We lay them before Thee Lord with confidence that Thou art well able to answer the petitions of our hearts. Answer

them if it should please Thee Lord in accordance with Thy will. We pray for our country, for our president, and for decisions that are constantly being made that are so important. We ask that Thou wilt guide this nation. Guide us even more closely into the truth of the word of God. Be with us now in this meeting as we sing, as we have fellowship with one another. As we listen to the word of God, may our Savior, who loved us and died for us, be exalted. For we pray in his name. Amen.

[Message] The subject for today, as we continue our exposition of 2 Corinthians, is “War”. What a change of tone one notices when one comes to chapter 10 of 2 Corinthians, after chapters 8 and 9. From compliments, the apostle turns to conflicts; from praise to admonition, from encouragement to warning. One commentator has said, “This chapter presents the remarkable spectacle of a minister of peace and of the gospel of peace going forth to war.” It was not, however, really remarkable for the apostle. He conceived of Christianity as warfare with a deadly, lethal enemy. In fact, if you look through Paul’s writings, it becomes evident that he thinks of the Christian life as a struggle with the world, with the devil, and with the flesh as well.

Many of you are acquainted with Commander Oliver Hazard Perry, who was one of the great naval commanders of the United States. During the Battle of Lake Erie in 1813, Perry’s flagship, the *Lawrence* was so badly damaged, that he was obliged to abandon it and be towed to the Niagara. And after finally forcing the British fleet to surrender, Perry made -- when he made his dispatch to headquarters -- no reference to the exigencies of the battle, and he announced his victory in these famous words. “We have met the enemy and they are ours.”

Now, his words are memorable, but they’ve become immortal through the parody on them by Walt Kelly’s inimitable Pogo, who if you remember in his column said, “We have met the enemy and he is us.” So when we speak about the world, the flesh, and the devil, we’re speaking about the enemies we have, and one of them is we ourselves. So

the apostle, when he talks about warfare, will talk about the world and he’ll talk about the devil, but he also will speak about the flesh.

And this is one of the things that comes before us now. Because chapter 10 begins with such a change of tone, and because chapters 10, 11, 12 and 13 are written in such a different seeming spirit, it’s not surprising that modern liberal scholarship has questioned the integrity of these last chapters particularly. That is as a legitimate part of 2 Corinthians. In fact, not simply modern liberal scholarship, but even some modern conservative scholarship has suggested that these last four chapters belong to another epistle of the Apostle Paul.

You’ll remember that we have pointed out, by just looking at our two epistles -- 1 and 2 Corinthians that we have -- we can learn from those two, that Paul wrote at least four to the Corinthian church. In 1 Corinthians -- that is, that book that we know as 1 Corinthians -- he alludes to a previous letter. So 1 Corinthians is at least, 2 Corinthians. And then in our 2 Corinthians, he also alludes to another letter, which is not 1 Corinthians -- a stinging letter. So we know that there was a 3 Corinthians at least, and that 2 Corinthians is really at least, 4 Corinthians. And we have no reason to believe that these are all the epistles that Paul ever wrote to that church. We just simply know that he wrote at least four.

Professor F.F. Bruce, a well respected conservative scholar has suggested, because of the difference in tone of chapters 10 through 13, that this is part of a fifth letter that Paul wrote to the Corinthians. Now, don’t get too disturbed. We remember that when we talk about the inspiration of the holy Scriptures, we’re not talking about the inspiration of the sources of the writers of Scripture, when we talk about the inspiration of Scripture. We’re talking about the inspiration of the document that we have as 2 Corinthians, for example. How this document may have been put together is another matter. Luke tells us in the Gospel that he wrote, that he used many different accounts. He refers to them

in the very first verse or two of his gospel. But the inspiration of the Gospel of Luke extends to the finished product.

But having said that, I think it is to be borne in mind that when the apostle begins chapter 10, there are reasons why we can think that he is really continuing what we know as 2 Corinthians. In the first place, there is no documentary basis at all that 2 Corinthians ever was circulated in any other form than the thirteen chapters that we know as 2 Corinthians. In other words, no manuscript authority exists for an epistle that does not possess integrity. That is, a letter with unity and wholeness. That’s one thing to remember. In other words, we’re speaking about speculation when people suggest that this epistle is not a single entire, whole epistle.

But secondly, remember too that the apostle carried on a correspondence with the Corinthians, and he was located in Macedonia when he wrote 2 Corinthians. It seems he was writing to Achaia, which wasn’t too many miles away. They did have communication, one with another. Titus traveled back and forth. Timothy traveled back and forth, we know from the Thessalonian epistles. And so it’s entirely possible that, as the apostle was going along writing 2 Corinthians, there suddenly came to him some further information about the conditions in Corinth. That would account for these chapters and for the tone of them. If that information suggested there were further difficulties in the church that he did not know about, or else, he had not appreciated the intensity of the difficulties. So we take the position fairly confidently, that chapters 10 through 13 belong to the epistle that we know as 2 Corinthians and the apostle now turns to a subject which he considered to be very serious because you see, if you attack the apostle’s apostolic authority, you ultimately are attacking the gospel, because it’s the gospel that he was proclaiming. That is the important thing.

In chapter 11, verse 4 he will speak about the errors that were circulating. He says, “If one comes and preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you

have not accepted, you bear this beautifully.” But you can see that he goes on to say that he doesn’t consider himself inferior to the apostles and he appeals to the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ for his message.

Now, that’s our introduction, and I want now to turn to verses 1 and 2, where he appeals to the Corinthians for responsive obedience. He begins with words that let us know immediately that he’s going to be rather serious with them. “Now, I Paul myself.” That itself, opens this section on a note of authority. It may be implicitly stated; not overtly stated. He doesn’t say, “Now, I’m going to talk about my authority”, but the very way in which he words his words suggests that he’s going to not simply be the subject of the sentence, but he’s going to be the subject under consideration for these next chapters. He says to them, “I 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.” So he, ironically, echoes their slander of his “spirit of bravado”, as they might have put it, in his letters.

Yes, Paul is like a craving dog who barks at a distance – at a safe distance. And so, when he’s here, he’s gentle, he’s kind, he’s sweet. But when he gets away and takes pen in hand, then the acid begins to flow. But he’s so far away from us, we cannot answer him face to face, and we cannot deal with him. He’s sweet when he’s here, but he’s not sweet when he’s not here.

And you can see this accusation of being fickle and changeable, is reflected in some of the things that the apostle had done. He had told them for example, he was coming to Corinth in a certain way, but changed his mind. And because he changed his mind, he was open to these accusations. If he was in God’s will when he said he was going to come directly to us, and now he’s not doing it, he’s out of God’s will now. And if he’s in God’s will now, he was not in God’s will when he said he was going to come directly to us. So the apostle is not one upon whom we can reply. He says, “Yea, yea and nay, nay.” As the earlier part of the epistle suggests, he’s very fickle. He therefore, is not really guided by the Holy Spirit. So I say ironically echoing their terms, he says, “I’m

coming to you, urging you in the meekness and gentleness of Christ, although you were speaking about me as meek when face to face, but bold when absent.”

This word “meekness” incidentally, is a word that sometimes is misunderstood. The specific word that is used here is a word that means something like “gentleness”. And Aristotle used this word of a judge, who not simply judged according to the law, but also added to it, a touch of gentleness. And when the law violated it seems, certain more fundamental moral questions that was taken into consideration, that kind of gentleness. So you know, it’s helpful for us to remember that certain laws may be actually, contrary to fundamental truth and morals. And on the other hand, certain fundamental truths and morals may be contrary to our laws. The fundamental law is the law of the word of God. The difficulty is, human beings do not always make their laws according to that which is right and truthful before God. So Aristotle uses it of the gentleness of an individual who exercised judgment and justice, but tempered it with the gentleness of something even more fundamental; true morality, as he understood it.

Now, the apostle in verse 2 speaks with a note of firmness. He says, “I ask that, when I am present I may 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.” So he warns them that, when he comes, he’s going to have to be very, very hard on some. And he asks that he may be allowed by their responsiveness to his words, to not force him to be hard and harsh with the Corinthian believers. And you can notice too, that he repudiates the false imputation that is made in verse 1 and verse 2. He explains that his walk is not a walk according to the flesh, although it’s a walk in the flesh. This is a man, my Christian believing friend whose captain is the king and the apostle thinks of him in that way.

He speaks now in verse 3 through verse 5 of the affirmation, mixes affirmation of Christian warfare. He states in verse 3 and 4, “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not

war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.”

Now, what Paul wants to say very plainly is simply this. He walks in the flesh. He’s just a man. He has a body such as you and I have. But at the same time he does not carry on his work according to sinful principles that dwell within our bodies. When he uses the expression “according to the flesh,” that’s a kind of a moral note. In other words, “according to the weakness and sin of the flesh.” So he walks in the flesh, but he does not carry on his warfare according to the flesh.

Practically speaking, Professor Tasker, I think, has put this quite well. He has said, “Carnal weapons, that is fleshly weapons, walking according to the flesh, such as human cleverness or ingenuity, organizing ability, eloquent diatribe, powerful propaganda, or reliance on charm or forcefulness, a personality, are all in themselves quite unavailing in the ceaseless task of pulling down strongholds in which evil is entrenched.” We live in a day in which that is characteristic of our society. We appeal to human cleverness. We appeal to propaganda. We rely on charm, as we understand charm. We rely on other fleshly kinds of activities in order to carry on the work of the Lord. And Mister, Professor Tasker goes on finally to cite the text from Zechariah as being applicable, “Not by might nor by power, but by my spirit says the Lord of hosts.”

We see this in the word of God so often too; individuals running down to Egypt or “leaning on the arm of the flesh”, as the Old Testament puts it. Take David, for example. What an interesting picture it is of this very fact that David, when he has to face Goliath finally after he has convinced the people of his nation that he, little David, is the one to face the mighty Philistine giant. The first thing they do in order to make a good fight out of it for them; is to try to put Saul’s armor on him. So the splendid armor of the great King Saul, who stood head and shoulders above the other Israelites, and probably, could have played on one of our NBA teams. The reason I say that so slowly is, this

morning at 8:30 in the burst of saying that, I said, “In one of our; play basketball for one of our NFL teams.” And I was very encouraged. One of the young people came afterwards, sought me out, in order to correct me. Well, it was very much of an encouragement to me because I know he was listening. He got that at least. What else he got, I don’t know, but he got that.

Any way, King Saul was tall enough to play for one of the NBA basketball teams and David; when David put that armor on, he took three steps in it before it moved. And he said, “This is not going to do.” He threw aside the armor of Saul; no doubt, many people were disturbed over that. “He’s going to go out there with nothing more than his slingshot and the five smooth stones?” which incidentally, as far as I know, are not the five points of Calvinism. But at any rate, he was going out to face the giant with the five stones and the slingshot, and that was all. But he was going out of course, in the name of the Lord God of Israel. He was going out to do precisely what Paul is talking about. He’s not going to war according to the flesh. But his warfare is with weapons that are mighty by virtue of God.

Now, the details are expressed in verse 5. The apostle says, “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.” Look, my Christian friend. Do you know what this is? This is the war in the world of thought. “We are destroying speculations -- reasoning’s, is the meaning of the original text -- and every lofty thing raise up against the knowledge of God.” What Paul aimed at, was the presuppositions of men’s philosophy of things, the proud bulwarks raised against the knowledge of God. And for the apostle, true freedom comes only in unconditional surrender.

It would be appropriate for us at this point, to talk about epistemology and how we can really know, but of course, in a message like this, I’m sure that’s hardly what would be appropriate for many of you. But let me say a few fundamental things. First of all, there is no sure knowledge apart from God. Let me repeat it again. There is no sure

knowledge apart from God. The very fact, that human knowledge is derived through means; which can never lead us to sure knowledge, is confirmation of the fact that there can never be sure knowledge apart from God. There are no facts in this universe that are bare facts alone. In other words, it’s impossible for us to speak about facts, apart from divine interpretation of them. God gives the only sure interpretation of any fact. We often make distinction between theories and facts. But there are no such things as quote, “facts” unquote, that are bare facts.

Let me illustrate that. There was a man who died on a hill outside the city of Jerusalem. We would say, “The fact is, Christ died for our sins.” That’s pretty simple, but that’s an interpretive fact. If we searched around the cross and asked people what happened, they would give us answers like this. Approaching one of the women, with tears streaming down her face, she would say, “He was the loveliest person I ever knew. Jesus; lovely, tender, merciful, died on the cross.” Approaching a Roman soldier, “There is a man who assumed that he was king, rather than Caesar. He was attacking the Roman Empire.” Look at the man in the long robes of the Pharisee, “He was a blasphemer.” And the true believer standing over by the side -- there weren’t too many of them -- but John when he came back. If you went up to him, he would say, “The Son of God died for my sins.”

All of those are interpretations of what happened on the cross at Calvary. And the true interpretation is the interpretation of the man who interprets according to the truth of God. After all, my Christian friend, if there is a God who created this universe -- and that’s one of my assumptions -- if there is a God who created this universe, then only he knows the meaning of all things in this universe. Only he, and those to whom he may reveal the truth that he wished them to know through the word and the Spirit. That’s why we say, “There is no sure knowledge apart from God.” Every fact receives its meaning ultimately, from God himself. He tells us what facts really mean -- what they are. There

is no other knowledge other than that. So everything is ultimately interpreted correctly, only through the God of his word and the Holy Spirit.

Now, when we think of the Apostle Paul, and we think about the weapons he used in order to fight the men of his day. Isn't it striking he doesn't say, "Now, I paid a great deal of attention in certain ways to Plato's theology", and then mentions several others. He never mentions -- isn't it striking -- here is a man who obviously was an important man of his day. And if what he did, in any measure, the greatest man of his day, doesn't seem to even know that Plato existed. He doesn't say anything about Socrates. His weapons are not the weapons of human philosophy. He says, "We destroy speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God." This was his weapon.

Spelling it out, it was, first of all, divine revelation in the Holy Scriptures. They were authoritative for him. He read through their Scriptures and the Holy Spirit accredited them to his open heart -- opened by the Holy Spirit. He acted -- those Scriptures were accredited as the spirit shined upon the word of God in his reading of them. To put it in the word of the psalmist, "In Thy light, we shall see light." Let me say it again. "In Thy light, we shall see light." There is no light to any man about anything ultimately in this universe; that is not light from God. "In Thy Light, shall we see light."

The Spirit shining on the Scriptures is the source of the knowledge of God. That is what Paul thought. So he began with divine revelation and holy Scripture, the ground of all knowledge. He believed in the divine creation and he believed -- not simply -- that there is a creation about us. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth, but he believed that men were created in the image of God. And being created in the image of God, they knew God.

And furthermore, even as a result of the fall, they still know God. The apostle makes that point in first -- in the first chapter of the epistle to the Romans very plainly. He said, "Men still know God, but they suppress that knowledge." The wrath of God has

been revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who are holding down or suppressing the truth in unrighteousness. Everybody knows God. Everyone. When we preach the gospel, we preach with the confident assurance that deep down in the heart of every man, is the knowledge of the existence of God. Now mind you, we’re not talking about the knowledge of him as their personal savior. But everyone knows the existence of God.

Now, you may say, I’m an atheist. You may say, I’m an agnostic. He may fight, suppress the truth but nevertheless, according to the word of God, he knows it. It’s part of his creation as a man in the image of God. It’s part of his image, to know his creator. So we confidently appeal to men, that they do know God. They know he exists. But, they don’t know other things about themselves or about him yet.

The apostle also relied heavily upon the fact that the Scriptures reveal that men, as a result of the fall, are depraved men. “And that for a man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God, their foolishness to him, neither can he know them for they are spiritually discerned.” The apostle looked out on audiences such as this and would recognize that, apart from the work of the Holy Spirit, there can be no saving knowledge of God. Men are blind. They cannot know. “They are dead in sin,” he tells the Ephesians.

Furthermore, in the Epistle to the Romans, in a text I’ve cited many times. If there’s one text that you should remember, it’s this one, “The mind of the flesh is enmity against God. It is not subject to the law of God. Neither indeed can be, so that they that are in the flesh can not please God.” This, the apostle proceeded from in his preaching; that men did not know the saving work of the Lord Jesus Christ and could not know that saving work apart from divine illumination. Paul preached a divine redeemer. “In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God”, he would have felt was sound biblical truth.

When we read, “The word became flesh and dwelt among us”, he would have said “Amen” to that. And when the Savior on the cross; said, “It is finished”, the apostle’s

theological expositions of the work of Christ, are expositions of that great truth. He saw it as a Trinitarian transaction. As the Father, giving the Son, who executed the work of redemption and then was -- it was administrated by the Holy Spirit. And these three persons of the Trinity, working in concert, accomplishing the purposes of the Father through the work of the Son and the specific application of the saving work of Christ to those who had been elected by the Father.

Now, let me say to you my friends; if it is true that the work of God is the work of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, accomplished through the saving work of the Lord Jesus Christ, then, there must be an infinite concern on the part of the Trinity in heaven for the success of that work. Every thing that is transpiring in this universe in a Christian way, is the product of the work of God, seeking to accomplish his purposes through the men whom he’s brought -- men and women -- whom he has brought to know our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

The Lord Jesus can say to every sinner, that which the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews says to those who were reading his book, “You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin, but I have.” He can say to every sinner, “I spoke to my Father in Gethsemane and said, “Oh my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me nevertheless, not my will but Thine be done.” And on the cross at Calvary I said, “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?” Oh, how Christian preachers should fear to preach any error in the light of the concern of the eternal Trinity; that the truth of the gospel go forth. He preached an atoning substitutionary sacrifice.

Paul’s letters are really an exposition of what it means for Christ to die on the cross. Paying, not totally omitting the teaching ministry of our Lord, but paying relatively little attention to the things our Lord taught in his earthly ministry, perhaps because they were well known by the believers. Paul concentrated his attention on the meaning of the cross. Told the Corinthians, “When I came to you, I determined to preach Jesus Christ and him crucified. That’s what I preached.” That was the ground of faith and Paul

understood it to be such and therefore, fundamental. He preached justification by faith, not by the works of the law. Not by joining the church. Not by doing good works. Not by being educated. Not by being cultured. Not by being a philosopher or a great thinker. But stated over and over again, in his great capital epistles, “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God.” Justified by faith. Peace with God. Bowing one’s heart before the Lord. Confessing one’s sin to the Lord himself. Receiving as a free gift, a righteous spending before God that is acceptable to him.

William Cunningham used to say, “The righteousness of God, is that righteousness which God’s righteousness requires him to require.” That’s what we have when we believe in Jesus Christ. And of course, Paul preached eternal judgment. Who can effectively expound eternal judgment?

Many years ago, I read a book by a well-known preacher of the nineteenth century. In it, he had a description of sin that has stuck with me for a very long time. I picked out a paragraph and if you listen to these powerful words by Mr. Muncie, you will see something of the significance of the fact that sin flows freely in our human existence. He said, “Sin is an immense river, running through secret channels from hell’s seething ocean ‘til it broke out upon this world in the Garden of Eden. There, at the foot of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, is its source. A noisy, bubbling spring with the escape of baneful gases, in whose tenebrous depths, a serpent lives. Ever enlarging, this river flows all round the world. Onward it sweeps. Up upon its banks no flowers grow. No foliage waves, but perpetual desolation pitches its pavilions upon the sterile strand. Relieved here and there by bold and scoria rocks, upon which weeping spirits sit and curse the day that they were born. In all the universe, there is no river so wide, so deep, so swift as this. Its floods are black. Its waves are towering. It goes surging and roaring on to the bottomless lake. Everlasting lightnings, penciling every billowy crest with angry fire and hell’s terrific thunders, bounding from bank to bank and bursting with awful crash and strewing dead ruin all around.” That’s sin. That’s sin in the human race.

That’s sin in our bodies themselves. We dwell in our human existence with the sin principle in our members. We stand before a Holy God as guilty, condemned, headed for a Christ less eternity.

These are the fortresses that Paul was talking about. He says, “We are drawing that God’s weapons are divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We’re destroying the speculations and every loft; speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God.” All of those little fortresses that man erects like, “I don’t want to know God.” Imagine it. There is a creature of God, “I don’t want to know God.” Unbelief is high treason plucking at the crown jewel of God’s truthfulness. Or maybe there are some who say, “I already know about God.”

Mr. Spurgeon says, “They are the graduates of the University of Self-Importance. They already know God.” Or, they say perhaps, “I can find God without his help.” Do you know what the Bible says about that? In the Old Testament, as well as in the New, and it was such an important text, that the Lord Jesus himself cited the text. He said, “His sons are all taught by him. His sons are all taught by him.” Every individual who knows the Lord; is someone who has been taught by him. That’s in the text in which he says, “No man can come to me except the Father which has sent me. Draw on him.” Everyone taught by him will come to him, but no one can come to him who has not been taught by him.

Look, the gospel is like the trumpets that were blown around Jericho and the shout of the children of Israel at that moment when the walls supernaturally, of that great city, fell flat. The gospel is just like that. The walls were laid low like the Popes Towers in San Antonio the other day. That’s what the gospel does when the gospel is proclaimed to thinking men in 1987.

Occasionally you know, I get very challenging and pleasing letters, I must say. I got one a week or so ago. It’s in my mind particularly because I answered it this week. A young university student in the state of Arkansas -- he has a long way to go. Now, he’s

a very intelligent young man and he wrote me a very nice letter, about five pages actually. He went on to tell me how God had spoken to him, how God had blessed him, how God had built him up. Through the ministry of the Chapel, both its written ministries and its tapes. I'm not suggesting that that was the only reason for his growth, but he did compliment the people in the tape ministry and the written ministry, for sending him materials. Then he went on to say, "I have two more years of college and my goal in life is to finish college, to go on to theological seminary and to teach biblical and New Testament theology as my life's calling."

Now, he said after saying this. He said, "I already have four thousand volumes in my library." And he said, "I would like some advice about some of the ones that I should specialize in for the next couple of years." Well, he wrote me two pages of some of the books that he has, and I want you to know he has a sound theological library. He has Shedd's theology. He has Hodge theology. He has Berkhoff's theology. He has Calvin's *Institutes*. He has some others that are not as good as those, but also -- then he mentioned his exegetical works, and they were sound exegetical works. And I had a lovely time picking out some of them and saying these are some of the things that you should stress. But then he made a statement that just particularly impressed me. He said, "I'm going through; I'm in school right now and beginning the first of my final two years. He said, "I'm in school right now and so I only have time to study two hours every morning. I only have time to study two hours every morning."

Now, if he had said fifteen minutes, I could have understood that. And I would have thought, "Well good, I'm glad you're putting aside fifteen minutes every day." "But I only have time to study two hours every morning." That young man is going to make his mark in the Lord's work if the Lord should allow him that privilege, and if he should remain as he is now, evidently, very committed to him. Those are the ways by which God destroys the speculations and every lofty thing that is raised up against the knowledge of God.

Well, our time is up. The game is about to begin. And the sixth verse is an admonition of discipline. Moffett renders this, I think, very beautifully. He says, "I'm prepared to court marshal anyone who remains insubordinate, once your submission is complete." That's in the -- that's in the mood of this passage. "I'm prepared to court marshal anyone who remains insubordinate, once your -- that is, you Corinthian believers -- once your submission is complete." In other words, I will act severely when I come to Corinth, but it will be severity after other means have failed. The unresponsive will be revealed thereby and they will come under divine discipline.

Let me sum it up by saying this; that war is our inevitable Christian calling. Every one of us is in the army of the Lord Jesus Christ. Every one of us marches in the spirit of our great hymn, "Onward Christian Soldiers", marching as to war, with the cross of Jesus, going on before. And in the spirit of Martin Luther's "Mighty Fortress is our God." May the thoughts that we have had and the thoughts that we have, and the -- the sufferesters of the world, whether they come from the philosophies and the sufferesters of the world, or from the species of beautifully ploys of the logic of the evil one, may they be lead into the captivity to our Lord Jesus Christ, of which he speaks here.

If you're in our audience and you've never believed in Christ, there's no need for me to remind you again of the things that I have said. If you have never believed in him, you need him. May God in his grace, open your minds. May in his light, you see light. The light about yourself, and the light about him, and may you flee to him for eternal life. We invite you, as an ambassador of the Lord Jesus -- not an apostle, as an ambassador -- to come to him. Believe in him. Rest yourself in faith upon him, for the glory of his name and for your salvation. Let's stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we are indeed grateful to Thee for men such as Paul who, by Thy grace were enabled to throw down the fortresses of the men of their day. Enable us by Thy grace Lord, through Thy power, in measure at least, to do the same. For those who

are here without Christ, Lord we plead with Thee. Bring them to the knowledge of him,
whom to know, in his saving sacrifice, is eternal life. For his name's sake. Amen.