



Exalting Christ in An Age of Epidemic Denial

“¹Now I, Paul, myself am pleading with you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ—who in presence am lowly among you, but being absent am bold toward you. ²But I beg you that when I am present, I may not be bold with that confidence by which I intend to be bold against some, who think of us as if we walked according to the flesh. ³For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. ⁴For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, ⁵casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, ⁶and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.” -2 Corinthians 10:1-6

The apostle Paul, one of the most important Christian leaders of the first century and probably the greatest Christian missionary in church history came under verbal attack from some of the very people he was helping to disciple. He uses a sarcastic tone in verse 1 referencing the fact that he was accused by the Corinthian Christians of being some sort of a tough-guy when he was away but when he was in person meek and humble. He also mentions in verse 2 that some in the church were slandering his reputation by saying that he and his co-workers didn't actually follow the leadership of the Holy Spirit -instead they did as they pleased and led as they felt.

Paul answered by saying (verse 2-3) that they would see for themselves when he came to visit next whether or not he was all show. He mentions "*warring*" and "*the weapons of our warfare*" as if to imply some sort of public confrontation on the horizon with his accusers. But he suddenly veers left in his response. The weapons that he referred to were not for fighting his Corinthian accusers -they were for resisting the advance of demonic spirits preying upon weak individuals by way of their thoughts and emotions. Paul implies in verses 4-5 that demonic powers were at work though jealous, prideful, offended, and immature people to discredit God by first discrediting Paul and his ministry team. The spiritual attack against Paul was really a spiritual attack against the God working *through* Paul in order to keep people from encountering the power and beauty of Christ Jesus.

Paul refers to strongholds, arguments, and everything else that would seek to exalt itself against the knowledge of God. What does he mean? A stronghold is a military installation used for housing soldiers in battle. He is referring to the ways that people think when they live apart from God. In other words, belief systems and patterns of thought that direct our behavior and influence our emotions in ways that are negative and hostile to God. These are strongholds within our minds. He refers to arguments rooted in secular humanism or demonic logic that seem to make a great deal of sense to our unrenewed mind. This includes all manner of philosophies, worldviews, and religious expressions that seem so wise and noble but lack the power to produce lasting, Godly transformation in the human will and experience. Paul also refers to any other thing (thought, feeling, or belief) that would seek to substitute the truth about God's personality, power, wisdom, and leadership for an alternative way of dealing with the success, challenges, and brokenness of this present age.

Ultimately, Paul says, demonic powers are at work to deceive people by influencing the way that they think and feel with a deceptive power that often seems wise and sound but ultimately rejects the message of Jesus. Paul says we must learn to take or thinking captive instead of being held captive by it and wash it in the truth of the word of God. In this way God will "*avenge all disobedience.*" Simply put, God will redeem all the lost time that we have spent as slaves of the Devil's deception. For some, an entire lifetime. God is not promising to punish us for our wrong thinking and actions in our past -no, when we confess our sin to Jesus and receive His forgiveness and embrace the call to follow Him, He will put His Holy Spirit inside of us and use us in such glory and power that our new life in Christ will far outshine our old life spent in bondage to demonic thinking and feeling! *Jesus calls us to know the Truth so that the Truth may set us free!*