

One War, Many Battles
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“Father, we thank you and praise you and give you the glory for this day. We’re so glad to be in your house today. Father, we need to be here; we’ve had a busy week, and we have been inundated by the things of this world. We need to quiet our lives for a few moments today. Father, would you help us to quiet our hearts this morning? Help us to tune into you today. Help us to listen to you, hear your words, and Father, we know you have a message for us today. We’ve been singing about it all morning, and Father, we pray that you’ll help us as we open up the Holy Scriptures, as we make comments this morning. We pray that your Holy Spirit will direct everything that we say today and that your Holy Spirit will help us to receive everything well. Father, if there’s a need in our heart to surrender more to you, or just to surrender to you at all, Father we ask that you will help us to do business with you today. Father, I thank you for all who are here this morning. I thank you for who they are, for their life, and Father, for their trust and their faith in you. I ask you to give them all the grace and the strength they need for this day. Father, we’ll trust you with tomorrow. In Christ’s name we pray, amen.”

II Corinthians Chapter 10 in your Bibles this morning. I will be making reference to the I Samuel 17 text that Kent read earlier. II Corinthians Chapter 10. I would like to read two or maybe three verses of scripture. I’m still trying to decide. Two for sure. II Corinthians 10:3: “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh.” Now I’ll tell you about the context of this chapter in a moment because it’s probably not what you’re thinking it is. “For though we walk in the flesh.” We’re all walking in the flesh, right? We are, in our bodies. We are a fleshly being, a spirit indwelling a body. “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh.” That’s a great verse of scripture. And then, a parenthetical statement in the King James: verse 4: “For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds.” And I think we’ll read verse 5: “Casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.”

I would like to tell you this morning – inform you – that we are in warfare today. This statement is true for all who are in Christ. Now, if you do not belong to Jesus Christ this morning, you are not in warfare. But for all who have committed their life to Jesus Christ by faith, we are in warfare today. It is extremely important for you to know with great precision what kind of war you are involved in. You are greatly hindered from winning the war if you don’t know what kind of war it really is. So God wants you to know; He’s been very precise in His communication within His word about the warfare we’re involved in. The war is for one thing – just one thing. And you’ve probably heard it said many times before. **The war is for your soul.** That’s important information. The war is for your soul. It is for nothing else but this one thing, and the enemy will do everything and all things in order to win this war for your soul.

This idea of the human soul is interesting. It’s also kind of vague, and I think God can help us a little bit to understand, for working purposes this morning, what the soul really is. Sometimes, we use the words “soul” and “spirit” interchangeably, and sometimes, you can get away with that, but it doesn’t always work in every instance because the soul is not exactly

what the human spirit really is. The human spirit is your being – your spiritual being, created in the image of God. The soul involves much more than that. The soul, in what I think is one of the best descriptions or definitions is, it is your total being. Who you really are, which involves your body, your emotions, your propensities, and certainly, your human spirit. It is every part of you, the full package of you. That's your human soul. Now, we may be able to improve on that and do better than that, but that is something we can work with this morning. It is your total being, your total self. It is every part of you, your existence, your being, yourself, it is all and every part of you.

And the enemy is after YOU. He wants you. Like the Uncle Sam poster, I WANT YOU. This war that we are involved in, whether you know it or not, it is only for you. You are at risk. Now, how important is this war, if we know it's all about you? It's all about me. It becomes extremely important once you personalize the war to yourself. If you lose, you are lost forever. If you lose, you are lost forever, your total being. If you have victory, you are found forever in Jesus Christ, in His eternity. You are found forever. It is imperative for us today to win the war. Your eternity depends upon it.

Now, something else that may be familiar to you: there is one war, but there are many battles. That sounds like a good Youth Camp message, huh? The war is for your soul, but the battle is for your will. The war is for your soul, but every battle is for your will. Will you trust God? Will you depend upon Him? Will you surrender your life in every moment at every battle? The war is for your soul; the battle is for your will. So, as we fight the war, we will fight the battles, and every battle is for your human will. Now this information is invaluable to you as a Christian. We may be slumbering and sleeping. We may be on autopilot and unaware of our needs before God. It is a call to wake up and see the battle. Every time your will is given contrary to God's will, the enemy has won the battle of the day. Every time your will is given contrary to God's will, the enemy has won the battle of the day. Every time your will is given contrary to God's will, the enemy wins the battle. And with every battle won by the enemy, we are one step closer to losing the war.

Now, if you lose your war, you'll have an eternity of regret. The nature of regret is always an acute awareness that you could have made better decisions, producing a better outcome. Isn't that the nature of regret in your life? Anybody have any regrets? It's an awareness – an acute awareness – that, "hey, I could've made some better decisions upstream to produce a better outcome in my life." If we lose the war, we'll have an eternity of regret. Brother Jerry Slye spoke about regret at Youth Camp this summer. Let's make better decisions. That's the point. Let's make better decisions now about the present battle in order to win the war. I pray God will help us to do that.

In our text this morning, verse three is interesting. It says, "Though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh." This is one of the statements where I put "important, important, important" by it in my notes. This information: "We do not war after the flesh." It is very similar to Ephesians 6:12. "We wrestle not against flesh and blood but against (blank, blank, blank – remember those?) and the final one is "spiritual wickedness." We left out the first three on purpose. "We wrestle not against flesh and blood but against... spiritual wickedness." Spiritual wickedness. The nature of our warfare is spiritual. Specifically, spiritual wickedness.

Wickedness describes that which is in contradiction to the one true God. If something is in contradiction to the person, the purpose, or the program of God, it is spiritual wickedness. Everything that the enemy is doing and wanting to do in your life and my life is spiritual wickedness. It is contrary to the person of God, the purpose of God, and the program of God. Everything he wants to do is spiritual wickedness. Therefore, the warfare we are involved in is spiritual. Do you agree? If that is true, then every battle that we fight (guess what?), it is spiritual.

Therefore, our weapons (that's addressed in our text), Paul says they are not carnal. Shame on us if we're in a spiritual war, fighting spiritual battles, and we're using carnal weapons. We'll surely fail. He says in verse 4: "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds." Let's think for a moment. What are weapons? You might think of an old war movie that you have seen before or something you enjoy. What are weapons in general? Weapons are the means by which we hope and seek to achieve the victory, whether it's throwing a stone, throwing a spear, shooting a bow and arrow, maybe loading your musket. Whatever it is... maybe it's the sophisticated weaponry of our day that our armed forces have. Whatever it is in general, it is the means by which we hope to achieve the victory. From stones, spears, bows and arrows, black powder guns, cannons, to the modern, sophisticated weaponry of our day. Weapons have evolved today to very highly sophisticated killing machines.

Now, listen to what Paul is saying. There are all kinds of weapons out there for the warfare and the battles that you're involved in, but he says a great principle. Our weapons for our battles and our war, they are not carnal. The war is spiritual by nature. The battles are spiritual by nature. Our weapons are not of the flesh. Can you imagine the fundamental problem with bringing carnal weapons to a spiritual battle? There is fundamental error – and problems – with that, bringing carnal weapons to a spiritual battle.

I want to share some of Albert Barnes's words with you today. He said, "These weapons are not such as the men of the world use." Pretty simple words, but I like them. They are not such as the men of the world use. He's saying that these weapons are of a different nature, a different consistency. Now Albert Barnes also said that they are not such as are employed by conquerors, nor are they such as men in general rely on to advance their cause. Weapons. Another Barnes statement, which is more in context with II Corinthians 10, the chapter, says "We do not depend upon eloquence or talent or learning or wealth or beauty or any of the external aids on which the men of this world rely."

Chapter ten deals with Paul's ministry. It's almost like Paul has stopped his ministry for a moment in chapter ten, and he explains his position. He's saying to the Corinthians, "you know, I have rights, and I have privileges as a minister of the Gospel," but he also says, "I have boundaries, and I do not cross the boundaries." He also talks about his own person. He says that in his absence, he says, "I am bold toward you," writing, communicating, but in my presence, I am weak. That's not the mental picture I have of the apostle Paul. "In my letter-writing to you, when I'm not face to face with you, I write bold things to you – not afraid to write bold things when I'm away from you. But in my presence, I am base among you. I am weak before you."

Another verse in this chapter says his letters say that they are weighty and powerful, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible. I would imagine that the apostle Paul

was not the greatest public speaker there ever was, although we might have that mental image of Paul as really being the boisterous speaker. His bodily presence is weak, and his speech is contemptible. Barnes continues: "These weapons, they are not such as to derive advantage from any power inherent in themselves, these weapons." So this is the point: All things that naturally and reasonably symbolize strength and power in this world are not our weapons. All things that naturally and reasonably symbolize strength in this world are not our weapons. God has set forth a pattern and a model, accompanied by many examples of perfecting His might through man's weakness. And it is a liberating principle and an important one.

Paul expressed this best in II Corinthians 12:10. He said, "for when I am weak," (you know the rest?) "then am I strong." Weakness denotes a full and complete dependency upon God. In other words, if God does not, it will be not. If God does not, it will be not. And that's what Paul came to realize in his own life and heart. "For when I am weak, then am I strong." And the context was that Paul was going before God. "God, take away all these infirmities in my flesh – these things that are hindering me, keeping me from being the kind of person, the kind of preacher, that I need to be. God, if you'd just take away these problems, I'd be so much better for You." God spoke directly to his heart, and then Paul understood that "when I am weak, then am I strong." If God does not, it will be not. Paul says, "When I achieve this kind and depth of weakness, then – and only then – am I strong." This principle flies in the face of everything the world considers strong and mighty and powerful. It is so different. Whenever we truly get this, we'll find that our weak and frail weaponry is mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds. When I am weak, then am I strong.

It's almost as if a transmutation takes place. A transmutation means to "change into another." The nature of something, the form, the condition of something, to change into another. In the area of alchemy, it means the supposed conversion of base metals into something of higher value. It's taking something and transforming it into something of a much higher value. And this is what the principle is speaking of: When we surrender to the depths of our frailty and weakness and express our total confidence in God, God takes that weakness – He takes that frailty – and He transmutes it into strength. That's what Paul said. When I am weak, that's where I find strength. That's when God comes to me. That's when God meets my needs in the best way and the greatest way. When I know I am weak, and I put my trust and dependency upon Him, God is able to meet my need in the best way. In light of this principle, Paul responds, "Therefore, I take pleasure in infirmities, reproaches, necessities, persecutions, distresses for Christ's sake." He didn't go out and solicit these things. He didn't go out wanting problems to come to him, but when they came to him, Paul says, "I take pleasure in these things, knowing what God can do through them for me."

Weapons for our warfare – that's an interesting idea and subject. Now, I'm not here to list weapons this morning, but if we wanted to, we could. Last week, we talked about praying with prayer. What a weapon! Was that carnal or spiritual, praying with prayer? Spiritual.

You know what another great weapon is? Fellowship with other believers. There is strength in numbers. You know what Satan wants to do to you? He wants to isolate you from the pack. We've talked about that recently, I think. He wants to isolate you from the pack. If he can get you off by yourself, then he can really work on you. There's strength in numbers; you need to be with others of like faith. You need to be encouraged and lifted up by others who know your needs and are praying for you.

Another weapon is the word of your testimony. How long has it been since you shared your testimony with someone, told someone what the Lord is doing in your life? Let me tell you something. It'll help somebody else, but it'll help you probably more just to verbalize what God is doing in your life. "They overcame by the word of their testimony." Remember that verse? "They overcame by the word of their testimony."

Today, the purpose is not to list all the weapons of our warfare. It is to see the base, underlying principle of the weapons, and it is summed up best in one word: TRUST. The base principle of all of our weapons is trusting in God. Unswerving trust in God in the face of any battle is the base principle of mighty and powerful weaponry in spiritual warfare. This flies in total opposition and total contrast to the world's weapons and what the enemy does in your life. There is something wonderfully powerful in your life when you are fully trusting God. When you're trusting God, you'll be praying to God. When you're trusting God, you will be in His word. When you're trusting God, you'll be with others of like faith. When you're trusting God, you'll be sharing your testimony with others who need it – and even for yourself. When you're trusting God, your total being, yourself, your soul will be dependent on Jesus Christ in every moment of your life. For every battle you're facing, you will be surrendered to Him when you're trusting God. Unswerving trust in God in the face of any battle is the base principle of mighty and powerful weaponry in spiritual warfare. You may have all other weaponry that appears mighty and powerful from a carnal, world perspective, but void of trusting God, you have NOTHING. Christ said that "without Me, you can do nothing." Nothing. That is so true. Without Me, you can do nothing.

It's amazing – supernatural, really – what God can do as you come before Him, and you're seeking Him in your weakness, and you say, "Oh, I can't do anything for God because I am so weak and frail." Let me tell you, that's where God wants you to be. God is using those things in your life for His glory. Don't despise your weakness. Don't despise your frailties in your life or your troubles in life. Let God use those things for His glory.

Case in point: the battle at Ai. Joshua chapter 7. Following the tremendous victory at Jericho by the hand of God, a transmutation occurred in the opposite direction. The children of Israel went from an absolute and unswerving trust in God to a confidence and trust in themselves. You can see it so clearly. Joshua 6 to Joshua 7. Jericho was so easy. That was the fortified city with the walls, and God told them exactly what to do, and they did exactly what God said. And guess what. The walls came tumbling down. Something happened from the walls at Jericho falling to the next battle at Ai. The men went up to view Ai. You can read about this in Joshua chapter 7. They returned to Joshua, and they said these words: "Let not all the people go up, but let about two or three thousand men go up and smite Ai, and make not all the people to labor thither for they are but a few people." Do you see the difference? The shifting? A change took place in their hearts toward God. They were trusting God with Jericho; they trusted God to cross the Jordan, but when it came to the little city of Ai, (just a few thousand people there) they said to Joshua, "Hey, let's just go do this. Don't send everybody. We can do this." You know what happened, don't you? They were all destroyed, the children of Israel. Joshua fell upon his face before God. "God, why did you leave us? Why did you forsake us?" And God told Joshua, "I wasn't the One who left."

It's a position of the heart when we're trusting God, when we're leaning upon Him at every moment in our life, and there are times in our life when we think, "hey, we can do this by

ourselves.” There are times when we think that. The weapons of our warfare are not carnal. They’re spiritual. I want you to see in the example of Ai the shifting of the weaponry. They went from trusting God to trusting themselves. They became arrogant in the power they thought they had at Jericho, and they were just going to go whip up on this little city. God showed them differently. Unswerving trust in God in the face of any battle is the base principle of mighty and powerful weaponry.

Another case in point: one of the greatest Bible stories. In I Samuel 17, David and Goliath. A great mighty man of war, a Philistine named Goliath defied the armies of the living God. No man was able to stand before him. There was mockery, ridicule, there was laughing at the children of Israel. And here comes David, a little shepherd boy, who heard there was a battle going on. He BEGGED Saul to let him fight. He told Saul about all the victories he’d had in the past with other animals and the victory God had given him. Now I want you to notice the text that Kent read this morning, verse 38: “and Saul armed David with his armor. Now, again, the idea is weaponry. Saul armed David with his armor. He put on a helmet of brass. Can you imagine this young shepherd boy with this big old helmet of brass from King Saul? He armed him with a coat of mail, his body of armor, and David girded his big old sword. You see the fundamental problem with that? God’s trying to show us something very vividly – that it’s not going to work. He girded his sword and his armor “and he assayed to go for he had not proved it. And David said unto Saul, ‘Saul, I cannot go with all of this stuff. I have not proven them. I have all this great armor, and it’s really actually pretty nice, kind of heavy, but I haven’t ever used these in battle, so I don’t know that it will work. I must go with the things that I know will work.’

I was thinking of another illustration. I would imagine that when Tiger Woods plays golf, when he’s playing the Masters, he probably doesn’t go out and buy a new driver the night before, put it in his bag and take it out to use it. Why? Why doesn’t he go out and buy a brand new set of golf clubs to play for this Master’s tournament? Because he’s never played with them before! He’s going to play with the things he has confidence and security in.

And this is David’s life here. David said to King Saul, “Thanks for the armor, but it’s not going to work for me.” And in verse 40, he takes his shepherd’s staff in his hand, and he chose five smooth stones out of the brook, and he put them in his shepherd’s bag which he had, even in a scrip and his sling was in his hand as he drew near to the Philistine. The Philistine came on and drew near unto David and the man that bear the shield went before him. I want you to see the weapons today. “The man that bear the shield.” God’s not calling you to put a shield on. There is a shield you need, but it’s spiritual by nature. The weapons of our warfare are very different.

When the Philistine looked about and saw David, he disdained him. He disdained him for he was but a youth and ruddy and of fair countenance. And the Philistine said unto David, “Am I a dog that thou comest to me with staves?” And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. Notice what David said to Goliath the Philistine. David said (verse 45) to the Philistine, “Thou comest to me with a sword and with a spear and with a shield, but I come to thee with the name of the Lord of Hosts, the God of the armies of Israel.” So fundamentally different. “I come to thee with the name of the Lord.” David’s greatest weapon was not in five smooth stones, right? Is there something powerful in five smooth stones that lodged into the forehead

of Goliath? That's a great story. What was his weapon? What was his greatest asset? Here's this young boy and a big giant of a man – a warrior. David trusted God. He trusted God.

Brethren, we are at war. Choose your weapons carefully. Choose your weapons carefully. A careful choice is a choice to surrender your life to Jesus Christ, fully and completely and lean upon him. He will not let you down. Whatever battle you're facing in your life right now, and there are battles among us for sure, God can give you the strength that you need. God can give you the grace that you need, and he can give you the victory if you will trust in Him. You know, the message that we hear so much today is, "Well, you CAN'T have the victory. You just can't do it. While you're walking in the flesh, you can't have the victory, but God is saying something very different. If you'll commit your life to Him and know Him, and understand Him and receive His grace and His strength, you can have the victory in your life. No matter what battle you're facing, God can give you what you need if you trust in Him. We all have Goliaths in our life that we face. God knows how to take down the Goliaths of the world.

The question today is, "Will you trust Him?" Will you let God have the victory in your life and heart? It comes by asking Jesus Christ into your life. I know our message today has been a little different. I feel that even in our communication of that this morning. But I trust that God knows the needs that are here today, and there may be someone here who really needed that message today. Whatever the battle is that you're facing, God can meet your needs. Please know that when you leave here. God can meet your needs if you'll trust Him. Will you trust Him? Will you give your life to Him today? Will you let Him have complete control over your soul, your being? Every part of you is resting, trusting in Him? Will you do that?