

## **SUPERIOR WEAPONS NEED NOT BE SOPHISTICATED!**

**Today's Text: 2 Cor. 10:1-18**

### **Extracts:**

***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, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.... But "he who glories, let him glory in the LORD." For not he who commends himself is approved, but whom the Lord commends [2 Cor. 10: 3-6, 17-18].***

*On September 11, 2001, terrorists under the aegis of al Qaeda crashed hijacked American commercial planes into the Twin Towers in New York City, killing thousands of innocent people. The sad event has become known as 9/11. The then President of the United States, George Bush, vowed to find the al Qaeda leader, Osama bin Laden, adding, "It is our No. 1 priority and we will not rest until we find him."<sup>1</sup> With little or no support from the rest of the world, America used its military might to force regime change in Iraq and Afghanistan. Yet, bin Laden could not be found, captured or killed. President Obama who took over from Bush in January 2009 kept up the search for bin Laden. He even placed more emphasis on the use of unmanned aircraft (drones) that did enormous damage to the terrorist movement worldwide. Yet, bin Laden could not be traced. Then, Obama changed his tactics and put the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in charge. On May 11, 2011, a CIA-led operation, made up of 79 commandos, 6 helicopters and a military working dog raided Osama bin Laden's compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan, less than a mile from a Pakistan Military Academy, and killed him.*

*It took helicopters to do what advanced planes and tanks could not achieve! The lesson we learn from it is that superior weapons need not be sophisticated. Superior weapons must fit the wars we are fighting. That was the message that Paul was conveying to the church at Corinth and also to us today concerning spiritual warfare. If we want to win, we should not use carnal weapons, no matter how sophisticated. So, what superior weapons can bring us victory in spiritual warfare? Only God has them. Let us find out more on that from this week's study.*

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<sup>1</sup> Story is based on "Death of Osama bin Laden," From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Death\\_of\\_Osama\\_bin\\_Laden](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Death_of_Osama_bin_Laden)

## 1. Background: Superiority complex may be the problem!

Hezekiah was the king of Judah at the time. The king of Assyria, Sennacherib, had already taken the fortified cities in Judah and massed a great army against Jerusalem, under the command of a loquacious commander, Rabshakeh [2 Kgs 18: 13-17]. He sent word to Hezekiah through his troops, saying, “Thus says the great king, the king of Assyria, ‘What confidence is this in which you trust? *You speak of having plans and power for war, but they are mere words.* And in whom do you trust, that you rebel against me?’” [vv. 19-20]. He was ridiculing Hezekiah, his kingdom and his God.

The logical *carnal response* is to plan a counter attack with a stronger force. If you do not have it, you can seek help from allies. But what was Hezekiah’s response to the Assyrian threat? We are told, “***But the people held their peace and answered him not a word; for the king’s commandment was, ‘Do not answer him’***” [vv. 21-36]. In human eyes, we would hardly consider that a superior response to a deadly threat to his kingdom.

As you read the story, you will find that there was much more to it than meets the eye. ***Hezekiah*** knew that he could not match the military strength of the invading forces. Instead, he ***referred the matter to God by prayer and fasting***. God sent a response through Prophet Isaiah, saying, “Do not be afraid of the words which you have heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed Me. Surely I will send a spirit upon him, and he shall hear a rumour and return to his own land; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land” [2 Kgs 19: 1-7]. ***What followed was quite dramatic***. One night, an angel of the LORD went into the camp of the Assyrians and killed one hundred and eighty-five thousand fighters. In panic, King Sennacherib ran back to Nineveh, the Assyrian capital, where two of his sons murdered him [vv. 35-37]! ***Without shooting an arrow or throwing a spear, Hezekiah won a major victory***. I can imagine Sennacherib shaking his head all the way back to Assyria, saying, “It just can’t be true!”

But it was true. That is what Paul is opening our understanding to in this week’s study. When we are confronted with one challenge after another, how do we see our circumstances? When we decide to fight, do we even know who our opponents really are? Do we even have the proper diagnosis of our problems or are we allowing our carnally defined superiority complex to get in the way? ***Superiority complex exists when we think and/or behave as if we know it better than everybody else. We have nothing to learn but we have everything to teach others! But how come we still fail after throwing our best carnal weapons?*** For example, why should we fail our exams after studying so hard? Why are we working so hard but cannot see the money in our hands or in the bank? Why are we so rich and yet we are not happy? These are troubling issues that we hope to resolve in this week’s study. ***Paul’s Second Letter to the Corinthians gives us very helpful hints for winning our wars***, some of which are as follows:

a) *Know your enemies*

Paul wrote, “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh” [2 Cor. 1-3]. In other words, you cannot win if you do not even know your enemies. To know your enemy is to know who s(he) is and what is behind the moves against you. Writing to the Ephesian church, Paul said, “For ***we do not wrestle against flesh and blood***, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” [Eph. 6: 12]. ***Therefore, when you keep malice with your neighbour at home, at work or in your place of worship, do you know who your real enemy is? When your boss holds down your promotion or punishes you unfairly, how are you sure s(he) your real enemy?***

John the beloved disciple of Jesus was given a glimpse of the war that broke out in heaven earlier in time [Rev. 12: 1-17]. Archangel Michael and his angels fought on God’s side against the devil (Satan) and his angels. God’s forces won and threw Satan out of heaven down to the earth. John heard a loud voice saying, “Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time” [vv. 9-12]. Now, you know how he slipped into the Garden of Eden to cause the fall of Adam and Eve. For his punishment, God put enmity between him and the Seed of the woman, that is, Jesus Christ. He shall bruise the devil’s head and the devil shall bruise His heel [Gen. 3: 1-7; 14-15]. So, having failed to derail Christ’s salvation plan on the cross at Calvary, Satan has gone to make war with those “who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” [Rev. 12: 17].

Therefore, ***your real enemy consists of the devil*** “who transforms himself into an angel of light” ***and his ministers- false prophets and deceitful workers posing as “ministers of righteousness”*** [2 Cor. 11: 13-15]. For example, it was Satan that was behind David’s conducting of an unauthorized census of his people [1 Chron. 21: 1], Judas Iscariot’s betrayal of Jesus [Lk 22: 3] and Peter’s denial of the Lord during His trial [v. 31]. So, stop looking in the wrong direction!

b) *Use appropriate weapons against them*

Having recognised that carnal weapons are not appropriate for spiritual warfare, Paul draws our attention to such weapons that are mighty in God for achieving the following purposes [2 Cor. 10: 4-5]:

- Pulling down strongholds  
A stronghold is a power base, physical or spiritual, that will do whatever it takes to hold on to that privilege over you. Strongholds

are sustained by Satanic forces. *Nollywood*<sup>2</sup> movies have helped us to appreciate how ambitious and greedy people go into cults to gain or hold on to position, power or wealth. Do you know how many demonic forces are among the congregation where you worship? For example, until Jesus came into the synagogue at Capernaum, how could we have known that there were so many demons among the worshippers there [Mk 1: 21-28]?

So, that family land you are fighting for in your village, that elective political position you believe has to be yours- do you know the forces that your rivals are relying upon? Therefore, unless you have the power of God to pull down strongholds, you may be taking a risk with mere carnal weapons!

- Casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God  
What is it that exalts itself against the knowledge of God? It is called *pride*. For example, after Lucifer had been cast out of heaven, he boasted, “I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation; ... I will be like the Most High” [Is. 14: 12-14]. What a fool!

***Therefore, the starting point in casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God is to pull off your garment of self-importance and self-worth and put on humility and a contrite spirit.*** The little you know about God is what He has revealed to us but He is much bigger than that [Deut. 29: 29]!

- Bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ  
Most of us cannot trust others to lead them anywhere, especially in the area of salvation. They find it difficult to accept that salvation is by grace and not by hard work. Yet, Jesus has said that you cannot call Him Lord if you do not obey what He commands you to do [Lk 6: 46]. Jesus has said, “I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” [Jn 14: 6].

***When you believe in God but entertain doubts about Jesus as the only begotten Son of God, you have not brought every thought of yours into captivity to the obedience of Christ.*** The word of God says, “This is the victory that has overcome- our faith. Who is he that overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God” [1 Jn 5; 4-5].

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<sup>2</sup> The Nigerian counterpart of America’s Hollywood and India’s Bollywood.

See, for example, how a sorcerer, Elymas, tried to use his satanic powers to prevent the proconsul in the island of Paphos, Sergius Paulus, from receiving the word of God about Jesus from Paul and Barnabas. We are told, “He withstood them.” But Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, pulled down the “son of the devil” and Elymas became blind and had to be led out [**Acts 13: 6-11**]!

*From the foregoing, it is obvious that we could be our own worst enemies!* Most of us suffer from superiority complex. Instead of assessing the strengths and weaknesses of opposition, we boast about and rely on our inflated (carnal) sense of strength and self-importance. When we then fail or are defeated, we blame God for not coming to our help. Did you ask Him? When you did, did you do what He commanded you to do? Do you really trust Him? Indeed, “pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall” [**Prov. 16: 18**].

## 2. In search of appropriate weapons

If the carnal mind is driven by pride, it suggests that the spiritual mind is controlled by fear of the Lord and humility [**Prov. 15: 33**], a renewed mind that is fully conformed to the will of God [**Rom. 12: 2**]. If you can truly surrender self to God, here are some of the appropriate weapons that become available to you for winning your spiritual wars:

### a) *Accept that others can be better than you are!*

The word of God says, “A man’s steps are of the LORD; how then can a man understand his own way?” [**Prov. 20: 24**]. So, how can we claim that our way is always the high way on every topic under the sun, the kind of condescending attitude of the Pharisees towards tax collectors [**Lk 18: 9-14**]? Therefore, we should be ready to accept that God can use other people in our place. Once we are thus open-minded, we are put in a position to learn even from those we consider our “inferiors.”

For example, even though God spoke to Moses face-to-face [**Num. 12: 8**], it was from his father-in-law that he learnt the principles of delegation. We are told, “Moses heeded the voice of his father-in-law and did all that he had said.” That gave Moses more time for himself and his family, while empowering his subordinates to assist him in the huge administrative work of leading an unruly nation through the wilderness for forty years [**Ex. 18: 1-27**]. Take another example. David was looking for those who had come to raid and destroy his camp in Ziklag during his absence, taking away his and his men’s families. He came across a dying Egyptian servant whom he nursed back to life with food and medications. It was through him that David obtained the information that helped him to rescue the captives [**1 Sam. 30: 1-17**]. You can never know those that God will use to answer your prayers. Therefore, never EVER underrate anybody!

b) *Accept responsibility for your mistakes and apologise*

Sometimes, all it may take to put out the enemy's fires burning around you is to accept responsibility for your mistakes and apologise. It may cost you your power or position but there lies your honour from God's point of view. Somebody who cannot own up for error or apologise is not likely to be disposed to confess his/her sins to God.<sup>3</sup> Some of us, like Adam and Eve, shift blame to others rather than accept responsibility for our indiscretion [Gen. 3:12-13].<sup>4</sup>

It is in return and rest that we shall be saved; in quietness and confidence shall our strength be found. But if we choose to run, that is, persist in error, those pursuing us will be faster [Is. 30: 15-16]! Let your yes be yes and your no always be no. Anything more than those is from the evil one [Matt. 5: 37].

That the fear of God has now made you humble or longsuffering does not mean that the enemy will leave you alone. In fact, the more victories you win, the more vicious Satan can get in his attacks. That is why sometimes you can put down your foot and say, "Enough is enough!" [Jam. 4:7]. However, *only God can so mandate what you must do. By Him, you can run against any troop or leap over any wall* [Ps. 18: 29]. *Do not ever go after the devil and his human agents in flesh. That is Paul's warning to us this week.*

### 3. Conclusion: Jesus is your best weapon against Satan!

To the natural man who is carnally minded, walking by faith is foolishness [1 Cor. 2: 14]. That is why the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing but the power of God to those who are being saved [1 Cor. 1; 18].

*Jesus is your most appropriate weapon against Satan and his angels. So, what is your excuse for not bringing every thought of yours into captivity to the obedience of your Lord and Saviour? You may labour and be heavy laden but He can give you rest. You can take His yoke upon yourself and learn from Him because He is gentle and meek in heart. You will find rest for your soul because His yoke is easy and His burden light* [Matt. 11: 29-30]. It looks so simple but that is your highroad to victory over your enemies!

Indeed, superior weapons need not be sophisticated.

<sup>3</sup> "Can you repent when you can't apologise?" *Weekly Bible Study Series*, Vol. 8, No. 31; 18 Nov. 2007; [http://www.bibleresourcecentre.com/Volume\\_8/PDFs/Apologyprecedesrepentance.pdf](http://www.bibleresourcecentre.com/Volume_8/PDFs/Apologyprecedesrepentance.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> "Blame shifting is not repentance," *Weekly Bible Study Series*, Vol. 3 No. 3, 20 Jan. 2002; [http://www.bibleresourcecentre.com/Volume\\_3/PDFs/Blameshiftingisnotrepentance.pdf](http://www.bibleresourcecentre.com/Volume_3/PDFs/Blameshiftingisnotrepentance.pdf)