

CORINTHIANS - The MORE EXCELLENT WAY

STUDY 27

Waging War with Divine Weapons

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. 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 ... 2 COR.10:3-5 (NAS)

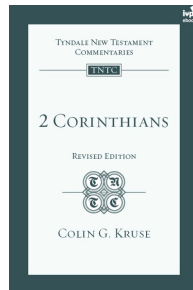
Study 27a: GOD'S WEAPONS & MEN'S 'TOWERS' (10:1-18)

10:1,2 What divine attributes are often neglected when Christians take on opposers of the gospel? [i.e. though it may have been **BOLDNESS** which attracted many adults to Christ, what more likely was it that attracted children and the downtrodden? - Mark 10:13-16; Matt.11:25,28-30]

[10:1] Among the Greeks from classical times onwards *meekness* (*prautes*) denoted a 'mild and gentle friendliness', a highly prized social virtue, and the opposite of brusqueness or sudden anger. [Kruse 172]

[10:1] Taken together these two words [*meekness* and *gentleness*] suggest a tolerant attitude towards others; the man who has these virtues will not lose his temper or grow impatient. [Barrett 247]

[10:2] For Paul, to 'live according to the flesh' means ... to have an egocentric, or at least anthropocentric, existence, to be so absorbed in that which is not God as to relegate God to a subordinate place, if to any place at all. It appears from the context of x-xiii as a whole that for his adversaries to 'live according to the flesh' meant not to have visions and ecstatic experiences; perhaps, even, not to behave in an authoritarian self-assertive way that could be ascribed to spiritual authority and superiority. [Barrett 249-50]



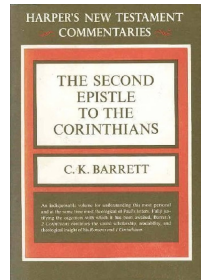
To "live according to the flesh"

10:3-5a Suggest some of the 'fortresses' ['strongholds' - KJV, RSV, NEB, NIV, NRSV] Christians may have to overthrow to obtain a fair hearing for the gospel (1 Cor 1:19-21, 2:1-8; see the Acts 17 studies 'Opposition & Opportunity: The Gospel to the Greeks' and 'Proclaiming the Attributes of God: Paul Adapts his Apologetic to Athens')

[10:4a] Only spiritual weapons are divinely powerful for the overthrow of the fortresses of evil. This constitutes an admonition to the Church and particularly to her leaders, for the temptation is ever present to meet the challenge of the world, which is under the sway of the evil one, with the carnal weapons of this world – with human wisdom and philosophy, with the attractions of secular entertainment, with the display of massive organization. [Hughes 350]

[10:4b] There is a probable allusion to Prov.xxi.22 [LXX]: The wise man attacks strong ... cities, and destroys the stronghold ... in which the ungodly trusted ... [Barrett 251]

[10:5] These 'strongholds' are the **arguments** and designs which present an **obstacle to the knowledge of God** unfolded in the gospel, whether they are calculated to pervert the true gospel of divine grace and replace it by another form of teaching which brings the souls of men into bondage, or to destroy Paul's apostolic status in the eyes of his converts and thus hinder the further discharge of his commission. The tone of this attack on human wisdom or sophistry which limits the gospel by the measure of its own standards is similar to that in 1 C. 1.19ff.; 3.18ff., although he may not have the same persons in view. The fortresses and high towers which vaunt themselves against the divine revelation may reflect a spiritual interpretation of the tower of Babel, described by Philo as 'the stronghold (Gk *ochyroma*, as here) built through persuasiveness of speech ... to divert and deflect the mind from honouring God' ... [Bruce 230]



10:5b-6 Is there a relationship between 'taking every thought captive

Do modern 'apostles' meet apostolic standards?

[J.B. Phillips' rendering of v.12] *Of course, we shouldn't dare include ourselves in the same class as those who write their own testimonials, or even to compare ourselves with them! All they are doing, of course, is to measure themselves by their own standards or by comparisons within their own circle, and that doesn't make for accurate estimation, you may be sure.*

In chs.10-13 Paul faces determined opposition. The opponents are Jewish Christians who put themselves forward as apostles of Christ. They highly prized eloquent speech, displays of authority, visions and revelations, and the performance of mighty works as the signs of a true apostle. [Kruse 170]

It is however fair to say that the rivals had no intention of measuring themselves by Paul's apostolic standard ... they knew quite well that they were using their own standards, and did not mean to use any others. What they failed to understand was that measurement by their own standards meant in effect the use of no standards at all ... Measurement implies an instrument of measurement, such as a measuring-rod (in Greek, [*kanon*]), and Paul proceeds to use this word in verses 13,15,16 (cf. Gal.vi.16, the only other use in the New Testament) ... God had provided a standard of apostolic behaviour and of apostolic preaching ... [Barrett 263-65]

to the obedience of Christ' and church discipline? (1 Cor.5; 11:17-34)

[10:5] Men's designs are captured and transferred to a new authority; instead of serving other interests they will henceforth be obedient only to Christ. [Barrett 253]

[10:5] And this analysis [Rom.1:18-25] reveals, starkly and precisely, the nature of the **high tower** raised against the knowledge of God within which proud unregenerate man immures himself. But, unless it is cast down by the gospel of God's grace in Christ Jesus, **his tower becomes his tomb**. [Hughes 353, emphasis added]

**"His tower
becomes his
tomb"**

10:7-12 What appears to be the criticism of Paul levelled by some in Corinth?

[10:8] Paul as an apostle has authority, but it is authority to proclaim the Gospel and thus call churches into being, and to watch over their growth once they exist. He has no authority to destroy the work of God; it is implied that when a man so acts as to endanger or damage the church, whatever status he may claim he has no authority and is no apostle. [Barrett 258]

10:13-18 Let us mark Paul's ability to balance humility with authority (1 Cor.9:1,2; 15:9-11)

[10:16] It is implied (and as we have seen the theme runs through the paragraph as a whole) that the rival apostles are content to work in another man's (notably Paul's) province, to appropriate (and spoil) his results, and to boast of their second-hand achievements. [Barrett 268-69]

Study 27b: TEST SELF-APPOINTED 'APOSTLES' (11:1-15)

11:1,2 Does Paul consider his work done now that the Corinthians are saints & brethren?



[11:2] He may compare himself in this verse to a father who gives his daughter to the bridegroom ... It is commonly assumed that the allusion is to the office of "the friend of the bridegroom," ... whose business it was to select the bride, to be responsible for her conduct, and to present her to the bridegroom. [Hodge 627]

11:3,4 What is the protection 'the last Eve' has from the deceiver?

[11:4] A message, whether judaizing or gnosticizing, which presents the saving work of Christ as something to be appropriated in any degree by human attainment and merit, is in Paul's eyes a **different gospel**, proclaiming **another Jesus** in the power of a **different Spirit**. [Bruce 236]

11:5-9 Identify the accusation(s) made against Paul (1 Cor.2:1-5). How has Paul arranged to defend himself from the charge of financial gain from ministry?

11:10-15 What is the chief characteristic of 'false apostles, deceitful workers'? (1 John 2:18,19)

[11:12] What Paul, in his boasting, is, is an apostle, who disinterestedly serves the Gospel and his people (iv.5) without any recompense. His rivals would like to boast of being, equally with him, apostles; but as long as he maintains the practice he has described they have no opportunity of putting themselves in the same disinterested category – unless of course they should adopt his practice of preaching for nothing ... it may not unreasonably be observed that the church owes more to Paul's kind of ministry than to the other. [Barrett 284-85]

Russell on who fulfilled Matthew 24:14

[on Matt. 24:14] This *witness* has already been given: the word of the Lord, the gospel of the Kingdom, has been published to every nation of earth. Each individual has not heard it; but that is not the statement of the prophecy. It was to be, and has been, a national proclamation. And **the end has come!** "The harvest is the end of the age," our Lord explained. (Matt.13:39.) Some have been disposed to query whether or not this prediction has yet been fulfilled, because the missionaries who have gone into heathen lands have very generally known little or nothing of the good tidings particularly specified by our Lord – "the good tidings of the Kingdom." But we answer, the printed gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John have gone to them brimming full of the Kingdom tidings, just as we have them ... we have set before us a remarkable movement in India which gives some idea of the darkness of heathen lands, and also of the influence of **our Bible, which the missionaries carried there**. [C.T. Russell *The Battle of Armageddon* (a.k.a. *The Day of Vengeance*), 1916 ed., pp. 568,210, bold emphasis added]

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