

Using Your Spiritual Weapons

Winning the Real Battle

2 Corinthians 10:1-5

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Bethany Church

Wesley J. Gabel

Three years ago, fifteen Mississippi youth and their chaperones took a dream ski trip to Canada. Imagine the excitement these southerners felt when they first spotted snow as they rode the train north. On the trip home, they had exhilarating feats and hilarious stories to tell until their train, at a crossing fifty miles south of Chicago, plowed into a semi-truck. It was night. The lights went out, and the teenagers found themselves flying about. As the cars pancaked and derailed, those sprayed with diesel fuel burst into flames. Eleven passengers were killed. Over a hundred were injured. Fifteen-year-old Christina Bomgaars survived along with the rest of the Mississippi party. She crawled out of the car next to the one with the most dead. She said:

You can't imagine the terror of not knowing if you're above water, if you're on a cliff, or if you're going to roll over... It makes you so aware of how short life is and how quickly it can be gone. You don't have to do anything. You just have to be in the wrong place.

How do we come to be in the wrong place? Do we come to be in the wrong place by chance? Is it by chance that they were hurt in a train wreck? Is it by chance that we suffer the ravages of a storm, fall victim to thieves, lose money in a bad market or economy? Is it by

chance that we lost our US Senator and experience a confusing and emotionally-charged election? Are all these forces affecting you and me impersonal and accidental?

I plugged the word *chance* into my computer Bible and found that the idea of chance is nonexistent in the New Testament. The word only appears to tell us that Jesus didn't have an opportunity to eat. However, in the Old Testament Solomon wrote:

The race is not to the swift or the battle to the strong, nor does food come to the wise or wealth to the brilliant or favor to the learned; but time and chance happen to them all. (Ecclesiastes 9:11, NIV)

Do you think Solomon believed in the impersonal forces of *time* and *chance*? I don't. Chance was not his point. He was saying that there are powerful forces influencing our lives that we cannot predict or control. Solomon repudiated the notion of chance when he wrote about casting lots in Proverbs 16:33: "***We may throw the dice, but the LORD determines how they fall***" (NLT). Outside of Solomon's statement in Ecclesiastes, the notion of chance is never taught and rarely espoused in the Old Testament.

Jesus and his apostles saw the human family affected by a spiritual war rather than chance. **Jesus interpreted every event in terms of God's unfolding plan of redemption and Satan's opposition to it.** This fall, we spent four Sundays educating our eyes so that we could see our struggle as Jesus does. Today is the last of three Sundays focusing on strategies that bring victory in spiritual warfare. There are three basic strategies. The first is to embrace your spiritual team. Every one of us needs spiritual partners. Spiritual isolation is dangerous. It is helpful to develop spiritual friends in a small group where you are known and supported. Nothing has been more important in shaping me. The second strategy is to don your spiritual armor. You must choose your thinking. There are perspectives to embrace and attitudes to adopt that help you walk like Christ. That is your spiritual armor.

Today we move from armor to weapons. Armor is for defense. It protects us when we take shots from the enemy. Roman armor protected only the front of a soldier. You were protected as long as you faced the enemy and fought. So how do we fight? What are our weapons? The Apostle Paul writes:

The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. (2 Corinthians 10:4-5, NIV)

The weapons for spiritual warfare are not spears, swords, guns or bombs. They don't destroy human life; they liberate it. They free human beings from the deception and bondage of devils. They demolish "mental blocks" so that people can freely see and taste God's love. As a result, people reestablish partnership with God and regain dominion over this earth.

There is no formal list of spiritual weapons in the Bible. There are certain things that advance God's rule and act as powerful weapons in the hands of believers. The first of these things is actually identified as a weapon. It's the *sword of the Spirit*. God's word is a powerful weapon. Scripture slices through deception, and it illustrates how the Spirit leads people to freedom and healing. God speaks through the Scripture and also through thoughts, impressions, visions, dreams, and messengers he sends us. Purpose to be directed by the word of God.

A second weapon is our tongue. The Bible calls it a weapon. It also compares it to the rudder of a ship because it controls what we experience. It directs so much of our future. The Bible also compares the tongue to a match in a cinder box-dry forest because of its power to cause such wide devastation.

I see the tongue as a canon. Load it with bitterness and you can't imagine the depth of the wounds and the breadth of the wounded. In a way, angry words are like an infectious virus. Their harm cannot be contained by the original target. They sting both those targeted and those

not targeted. The toxin of the anger is transmitted to everyone who hears the words, not just the person with whom we are angry; and then over time the toxin is passed from person to person leaving an endless chain of victims beyond those who initially witnessed the anger. Angry words continue to victimize for generations, and never stop claiming new victims. Like an endless ripple, our words have an ever expanding impact.

Load the tongue with grace, and you sow healing. Load the tongue with gentleness and angry people calm down. With mercy, wounded spirits taste love. The devil cannot perpetuate anger, division, loneliness, and discouragement where grace and mercy are sown. Gracious speech is an incredible weapon.

Load the tongue with *praise of God*, and hearts find courage. Load your tongue with thankfulness, and people acquire faith. The Bible records incredible feats with praise. It is an awesome weapon! Load the tongue with *wisdom*, and people are saved. An entire village was spared by the wise words of a poor man according to Solomon (Ecclesiastes 9:13-18).

Load the tongue with prayer, and you write a new history for humanity. Ten years ago, we learned a lot about weapons from the Gulf War. We learned that it is important to establish air superiority. When you control the air, you cut off communication, isolate your enemy, demoralized them and weaken their resistance. Prayer establishes air superiority. It weakens the enemy's grip on our communities. Specifically targeted prayers, like smart bombs, better accomplish our goals. In the last decade, we've seen prayer, both general and specifically targeted, bring more change than every before. Around the world, we now are witnessing the greatest movement to Christ in the history of humanity. Load your tongue with prayer.

Mother Theresa opened tens of thousands to the love of God because she obeyed Scripture and the prompting of the Spirit. The Scripture did not send her to Calcutta, India, but it

turned her eyes to the poor. The Spirit sent her to India. Mother Theresa affected millions because her tongue was loaded with grace, mercy, wisdom, praise and prayer. Mother Theresa altered this world because her hands fed the hungry, her arms carried the dying, her feet found shelter for the homeless, and her life offered them love. Let your tongue, hands, arms and feet become weapons that break the strongholds of Satan and liberate people.

Use the sword of the Spirit, and you'll be amazed. Use that canon, the tongue. Load it with the right stuff and you'll be excited. Use your entire body and you'll see fruit like Christ. Embrace your team, don your armor, and use your weapons to win the real battle of life.