

HOW TO FIGHT LIKE A CHRISTIAN
II CORINTHIANS 10:1-11

INTRODUCTION:

- A. *A few years ago, a Norwegian statistician computerized every war that had ever been fought. His study indicated that during 5,560 years of recorded history there have been 14,531 wars, averaging more than 2.6 wars each year. In our 185 generations, only 10 of those generations have witnessed unbroken peace. Throughout history, war has been the rule and peace the exception.* (George Sweeting, "Climbing Higher," *Moody Monthly*, February 1994, 63)
- B. If we were take our cues from the world, we would believe that the best ways are fight are...
- To have the largest arsenal. Like the guy that said that *Power comes from the barrel of a gun*. Like the Russian army trying to subdue Chechnya.
 - To have the best lawyers. Who really believes that OJ is really innocent? But he had good lawyers and he got off. And look at what that class action accomplished by going after the tobacco industry.
 - To be physically bigger or stronger like the ubiquitous playground bully.
 - To take an assertiveness training course.
- B. Just look at the stories in one day's newspaper.
Yesterday's **Everett Herald** has almost nothing but conflict on page 3A:
- Chechnya story
 - Florida lawmakers want to speed up executions
 - A Pakistani cleric freed via the Indian Airlines hijacking yesterday inflamed a crown of tens of thousands with a call to jihad (holy war) against India to retake the region of Kashmir.
 - And the President declares war on cyber-terrorism
- C. Christians are no strangers to conflict. The New Testament tells us to expect conflict. Jesus predicted it. So did Paul, Peter, James, Jude and John.
- D. If you go to school or a job or live in a neighborhood or are part of a family, or join a church (which just about covers all of us in this room), you will experience conflict. How are you supposed to deal with it?
- E. Paul was no stranger to conflict. It was practically his daily bread. It dogged his steps into every city and chased him out the gates when he left. Here in II Corinthians 10 he faces it again. Some of the people in Corinth have been spiritual rebels and have been thumbing their noses at Paul's authority at a distance. Paul is planning to come to town and he will deal with the sin in the church. But before he comes, he sends this letter of appeal to attempt to soften their hearts to repentance before he ever hits the city the limits. As I read this passage, I want you to listen for how he is trying to help these people do the right thing.
- I. **FIGHT WITH THE POWER OF AN APPEAL (verses 1-2)**
- A. Notice That Jesus Never Made Anybody Do Anything
NOTE: Paul appeals to the Corinthians and uses Jesus as the basis of his appeal, *by the meekness and gentleness of Christ*. He was very likely referring to Jesus' self description in Matthew 11:29, *Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart...* By the way, I did find two exceptions to this rule in the Gospel of Matthew: Jesus was forceful with demons: He cast them out of their victims. And in Matthew 21:12, Jesus forcibly cleared the temple of the merchandisers. But that's it.
1. Look at how our society does things.
- a. The IRS doesn't ask for a contribution. You pay your taxes or you go to jail.
 - b. Speed limit signs are not just a nice recommendation. We have enforcement personnel.

- c. This week, as I was paying my phone bill, I noticed something I always pay but never noticed called a Connectivity Charge. So I called ATT and asked what this was. It is a mandatory federal charge on every long distance user to provide Internet hook-up services for schools and libraries. Nobody asked me about that. I pay or I lose my long distance.
2. But Jesus never demanded that anyone follow Him
 - a. He invited the apostles and others to follow him. In Matthew 4:19 he called Peter and Andrew: *Come, follow me and I will make you fishers of men.* In verse 21 He called John and James. In 9:9 he said to Matthew, *follow me.* But it was all a matter of free will. They were free to make their own choice.
 - b. Judas was free to go. He let Thomas believe at his own speed. He asked the disciples in John 6 if they wanted to stay with Him. He actually made it hard for people to follow him because he only wanted free-will, dedicated followers who had counted the cost and only then made their decision. When one man declared himself a follower, Jesus said, *Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head. (Matthew 8:20)*
 3. Look at how Jesus handled the Pharisees and the woman taken in adultery. Even there he used no force. He appealed to their consciences. He said, *If any of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at he. (John 8:7)*
 4. Contrast the way Jesus with this true story told by **Joe Stowell**: *A blue Corolla seemed to be chasing a red Grand Am, blaring its horn constantly and driving nearly bumper-to-bumper behind the red car. At first I thought the driver of the Corolla was trying to flag down her friend in the car ahead. I turned right, and at the next red light I ended up next to the two cars. The woman in the Toyota climbed out, stormed over the Grand Am, and started banging on the window.*
“Don’t you ever cur me off like that again!” she screamed. The this woman, about 5 feet 8 inches, shouted something bad about the driver’s mother, with a few other insults thrown in for good measure, and stormed back to her car. At this point, a tall powerful-looking man got out of the Grand Am and walked back to the woman’s car as she climbed behind her steering wheel. I thought to myself, “She is going to get in her car, roll up the windows, lock the doors, and pretend like it never happened.” But to my shock, she got back out of her car and stood on her tiptoes right in his face, screaming more insults with seemingly no fear or realization of the danger she was in.
*It was pride at its best and its worst. The man shouted something back at her, and then decided to walk away, which was a humble response given his size advantage. He got into his car and pulled the door closed. But the woman marched in front of his car, crossed her arms, and stood there while the rest of us left, since the light had turned green. (Joseph Stowell, *Perilous Pursuits*, Moody, Chicago, 1994, 132)*
 5. Yep, that’s the way the world does it. But it’s not the way Jesus did things.
- B. Notice That the Apostles Never Made Anybody Do Anything
1. People didn’t have to give. Take the case of **Ananias and Sapphira** in Acts 5. God put them to death for hypocrisy about their giving. Peter told Ananias, *Didn’t it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn’t the money at your disposal. (Acts 5:4)*
 2. I breezed through all the letters of Paul this past week and marked all the times he used words like *urge, appeal, plead, ask, beg, exhort.* Very seldom does he use the word command. Paul always went to the heart. He wanted people to do the right thing because they wanted to do it from the heart. One of my favorite passages is **Philemon 9** in which Paul is urging Philemon to welcome a runaway slave as a brother in Christ. Paul writes, *I appeal to you on the basis of love.*

3. Tom Fuller just experienced this dynamic in Peru. Tom is the administrator of a Bible School down there. Recently one of his teachers and the local pastor had a big public fight. Tom and another nearby pastor were given the job of calling these two men to reconciliation. Tom and the pastor spent 4 hours one recent Sunday afternoon with the 2 adversaries. They repented and confessed and forgave each other. Then Tom told them that it was important for them to go public since the offence was public. They agreed. After Tom preached a short sermon the men publicly repented. Soon people all over the congregation were in tears repenting and asking for forgiveness from those they had offended. You don't get two adults together and **force** them to say they're sorry to each other. In fact it doesn't work even with little kids. Have you ever forced one of your kids to say he's sorry? Forced confessions never work.

Like the father who overheard his boy call a friend a twit. The dad leaned out the window and demanded, "Jimmy, you tell Billy you're sorry." And Jimmy said, "Billy, I'm sorry you're a twit."

 It doesn't mean anything if they don't really mean it in their hearts. And you can't force anyone to mean anything in his heart. It has to come from an appeal.
4. When **Japan** surrendered to the U.S., General Douglas MacArthur made a speech in which he referred to the continuing threat of war: *Military alliance, balances of power, the League of Nations – all in turn have failed. We have had our last chance. If we do not devise some greater and more equitable system, Armageddon will be at our door. The problem, basically, is theological....It must be of the spirit if we are to save the flesh.*
5. Tom Landry: *The job of a football coach is to make men do what they don't want to do, in order to achieve what they've always wanted to be.* That's what a Christian friend is trying to do through an appeal. He is trying to help his friend want to do the right thing and then to do the right thing: for his own good and for the good of others and for the good of the Kingdom of God.
6. Years ago I learned one of life's most valuable lessons from **Warren Wiersbe**. He explained to a group of us Salem pastors that he used to tell people who were sinning, "You can't do that!" Then, he said, he realized that they could too do it. They could do anything they wanted to do and he couldn't stop them. So he changed his demand to an appeal. Now this is what he says to people who are doing disobedient things: "You can do whatever you want....but you have to pay the consequences." By the way, that's very biblical. Check it out in **Galatians 6:7**.

II. FIGHT IN THE ARENA OF THE MIND (verses 3-5)

A. Demolish Strongholds

1. The greatest stronghold is the world of ideas. The battle is for the mind.
 - a. About 180 years ago, The Russian czar fell on his face in a Saint Petersburg church and plead with God to deliver his nation from the troops of Napoleon who had surrounded the city of Moscow. God heard that cry and brought a devastating winter that defeated Napoleon. Today that church has a sign on it that says, *Museum of Science and Atheism.* (Ravi Zacharias, *Creis of the Heart*, Word Publishing, Nashville, 1998, 4 and 27)

What happened? Ideas happened. Karl Marx wrote his ideas in a book in 1848. Those words were read by Lenin, who translated words into action in the Russian Revolution. He was succeeded by Stalin. That wasn't his real name. He chose it for effect because Stalin means *made of steel*. True to his name, he ruled Russia with an iron fist till 1953 and in the name of the state, he killed more people than Hitler did. And that's why a church is now a godless museum.
 - b. It happens right here in River City too. Take a drive up U.S. 2 through Gold Bar and Start Up. There are several churches on the north side of

the highway, but now they are art and sporting goods stores. And just when I think that's OK because there must not be many people living up there anymore, I see that the Mormons have just built a brand-new brick church building on the north side of the row.

- c. Ideas pounding in people's heads make them sacrifice to build church buildings for the worship of God and the reaching of the lost. Contrary ideas empty churches and lock their doors and then reopen them as commercial concerns.
 2. Several years ago I plowed through one of the toughest books I've ever handled. **Paul Johnson** surveys eleven brilliant men and one brilliant woman in his book, *Intellectuals*. The uniqueness of this book is that he goes beyond presenting the ideas of these thinkers; he exposes their lives. The impact of the book is devastating. If this book is a fair representation of the quality of life of the world's greatest intellectuals, the intellectuals are to be pitied and then feared. Indeed, the conclusion of the book states, "*The worst of all despotisms is the heartless tyranny of ideas.*"¹
 3. Consider Friedrich Nietzsche: *back in the nineteenth century, German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche had already declared the death of God and had etched out what that meant: the death of morality. He dismissed sin as nothing but a ruse invented by a wretched band of "ascetic priest[s]," Old Testament shamans who had achieved a magical hold over men and women by playing the "ravishing music" of guilt in their souls. And he denounced Christian morality as a morality for slaves. Kindness, forgiveness, humility, obedience, self-denial – these were the characteristics of weak, repressed slaves who had rejected the joy of life. To Nietzsche, the biblical ethic was nothing less than a pathology, a life-killing prudery. He looked forward to the evolution of a race of superhumans imbued with an ethic of power. A century later, the Nazis, taking their cue from Nietzsche, tried to create just such a superrace.* (Charles Colson, *How Now Shall We Live?*, Tyndale House Publishers, Wheaton, 1999, 173)
NOTE: And as a result **6 million Jews** were annihilated.
 4. Francis Schaeffer, *Today's unthinkable becomes tomorrow's thinkable with remarkable speed.*
 5. D. L. Moody, *A lie will travel around the world while truth is still putting on its boots.*
 6. **I Timothy 4:1** says that demons teach their doctrines in the world of men's ideas. **Ephesians 6** says that our real fight is not against flesh and blood but *against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.*
 7. All around us we see the tall and strong walls of ideas and systems that are built against the rule of God. And they imprison the hearts of men and women and kids.
- B. Capture Thoughts
1. How do you capture thoughts?
 - a. "...our attention is selective - you can tune in certain things and tune out others.
"Take a look around where you are sitting and have five things that have blue in them. Go ahead and do it.
"With a 'blue' mindset, you'll find that blue jumps right out at you: a blue book on the table, a blue pillow on the couch, blue in the painting on the wall, and so on. Similarly, whenever you learn a new word, you hear it six times in the next two days. In like fashion, you've probably noticed that after you buy a new car, you promptly see that make of car everywhere....That's because people find what they're looking for. If you're looking for conspiracies, you'll find

¹ Paul Johnson, *Intellectuals* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988) 342.

conspiracies. If you're looking for examples of man's good works, you'll find that too. It's all a matter of setting your mental channel." (Roger Van Oech, A Kick in the Seat of the Pants, Harper and Row, 1986, p.27)

- b. So we seek to change the way people think by exposing them to the **word of God**. That's got to be one of the weapons Paul is talking about.
We have to remember that the **Bible** is the sword of the Spirit and it does things that we sometimes scarcely believe are possible. Read about it in **Hebrews 4:12**.
Paul wasn't casual about the Bible as a change agent. **Colossians 1:28-29**, *We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me.*
- c. We seek to change the way people think by exposing them to prayer. We have to remember that God **does** answer prayer. Jesus and the disciples had just been talking about how hard it is for rich people to get saved. In fact Jesus had just said that it was easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to get saved. That comment blew the disciples away.
Then Jesus explained, *With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible. (Matthew 19:26)*
- d. We all know someone we secretly believe will never get saved. His or her mind is so prejudiced against Christianity and the Bible that you can't even talk to them anymore.
We all know someone who professes to be a Christian but is messing around with the world. You love that person so much and you are so hurt that you can't seem to get through to their heart. What does one do?
- e. You use the Bible every opportunity you get, because uses His word to get under people's skin. And you pray for God to do the impossible. God changed the mind of King Nebuchadnezzar. God changed the kind of Saul of Tarsus, feared inquisitor *par excellence!* God has changed the minds of many people in this room. Some of you were hard-core cases and God got through to you, didn't he! And he's not done getting through to people either!
- f. Some anonymous writer in France scrawled, *God is dead. Marx is dead. And I don't feel so good myself.*
- g. Nobody really, deep down in the core of his being, is going to feel good until he gets right with God. His ideas have to track with God's ideas if he is going to have true mental peace and happiness. When God uses you to capture someone's thoughts by helping their brain to come into obedience to Christ, you have given that person the most precious gift possible in this life.
- h. Right now I'm seeing that process happen in the heart of a friend. And it's the most exciting thing going in my life right now. Besides that, we just put our son on a jet for Prairie Bible Institute Friday morning. He wants to be a Youth Pastor. A year ago, he was out messing around with the world. God captured his thoughts. The Word of God worked. People prayed and God did the impossible!

III. FIGHT SO AS TO BUILD LIVES (verses 6-11)

A. Authority Does Involve Punishment

- 1. Last Sunday's Seattle Times headline screamed the protest of Mayor Paul Schell, *"I am not a wuss."*

2. Whatever you think of the Mayor, Paul is basically saying the same thing right here. The rebel faction was saying, He writes a mean letter, but face-to-face, he's just a big wuss.
 3. Up to this point in the letter, Paul uses the language of appeal. But now he takes off the gloves and talks that language of force and punishment. **Verse 6:** *And we will be ready to punish every act of disobedience...* When appeals fail in the body, enforcement steps in.
 - a. That doesn't mean that Christians are to ever physically or materially hurt anybody
 - b. It doesn't mean that excessive force is ever warranted.
 - c. I've often said that SCC ought to be the *safest place in the world*. But there is one kind of person who ought not to feel safe around here: the willful, disobedient Christian.
 - 1) Matthew 18 outlines process of discipline, even to exclusion from the church.
 - 2) I Corinthians 5 advocates expelling an immoral Christian brother
 - 3) II Thessalonians calls for shunning the lazy, deadbeat Christian who won't work and wants the church to support him.
 - 4) I Timothy 1:20 actually talks about turning some really nasty church members over to Satan.
- B. But Authority Is Really About Building Lives
1. People under spiritual authority ought to have every reason to believe that their spiritual leaders are deeply committed to their good, to their spiritual growth, to their success in their walk with Jesus.
 2. Cf. Peter's comment to Elders, **I Peter 5:2**, *Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers – not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be...*
 3. Galatians 6:1ff, *restore him gently...* Kan Sande points out that the word translated as "restore" (*katartizo*) means to mend, repair, equip, complete, or prepare. This word is used several times in the New Testament – to describe fishermen "mending" and "preparing" their nets (Matt. 4:21), Paul's "supplying" what is lacking in the Thessalonians' faith (I Thess. 3:10), Jesus' "equipping" believers with everything good for doing his will (Heb. 13:21), and God's restoring those who have suffered and making them "strong, firm and steadfast (I Peter 5:10).

This we can see that the goal of "katartizo, as used in Galatians 6:1, is to mend broken people and restore them to usefulness in God's kingdom. (The Peacemaker, Ken Sande, Baker Books, Grand Rapids, MI, 1997, 139-140)
 4. This past September the story broke about the president of as **Midwestern Baptist seminary** who had a problem with anger. The trustees called a special board meeting to probe 42 complaints of the president's anger, including profanity, toward other seminary executives and staff members. Seminary staff members feel *demoralized or alienated*. (Edward E. Plowman, "Midwestern heat wave," World magazine, September 11, 1999, 32)
 5. **John Maxwell** has a wonderful chart about FIVE LEVELS OF LEADERSHIP. The first level is the authority of **Position**: *People follow you because they have to*. That's where that seminary president is functioning. The highest level is the authority of **Respect**: *People follow you because of who you are and what you represent*. That's where we want to function here in this church and in all our people relationships that spill outside of these walls.
 6. Even church discipline is always pointed toward **RESTORATION**.

CONCLUSION:

- A. The Kilkenny Cats (anon.)

There wanst was two cats of Kilkenny,
Each thought there was one cat too many,
So they quarreled and they fit,
They scrat'd and they bit,
Till, barrin' their nails,
And the tips of their tails,
Instead of two cats, there warnt any.

- B. In a "Peanuts" cartoon, Lucy says to Snoopy: "There are times when you really bug me, but I must admit there are also times when I feel like giving you a big hug."
Snoopy replies "That's the way I am...huggable and buggable."

Timothy G. Walton
Snohomish Community Church
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