

# WINNING THE WAR YOU CANNOT SEE



## 2 CORINTHIANS 10:3-5

### INTRO

Family, before we talk about armor...  
Before we talk about weapons...  
Before we talk about victory...

We need to acknowledge something upfront:

### THE CHRISTIAN LIFE ASSUMES CONFLICT.

The armor of God does not exist because life is peaceful.  
It exists because battle is inevitable.

#### John 16:33

“These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. **In the world you will have tribulation**; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”

#### Matthew 10:22

“And you will be hated by all for My name’s sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved.”

If you are following Jesus, you are not exempt from warfare; you are enlisted.

Some of you walked in this morning smiling, but you are exhausted on the inside.  
Not because of what happened to you this week, but because of what’s been happening *in* you.

Thoughts. Pressure. Mental clutter. Accusations. Fear. Shame. Condemnation.

And here’s the danger:

If you don’t know **where** the battle is fought, you’ll fight the **wrong enemy**, with the **wrong weapons**, in the **wrong way**.

That’s why this matters today.

Because many believers love Jesus...

But they’re fighting spiritual battles with fleshly tools and losing ground they don’t have to lose.

## 2 CORINTHIANS 10:3–5

NKJV

**3** For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh.

**4** For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds,

**5** 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.”

 CSB

**3** For although we live in the flesh, we do not wage war according to the flesh,

**4** since the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but are powerful through God for the **demolition of strongholds**.

**5** We **demolish arguments and every proud thing that is raised up against the knowledge of God**, and we take **every thought captive** to obey Christ.”

### SETTING THE CONTEXT: WHAT PAUL IS ACTUALLY ADDRESSING

Before Paul teaches us how spiritual warfare works, he first shows us **what it is not**.

- 2 Corinthians chapters 10-12 are not abstract theology.
  - They are **pastoral and personal**.
- Paul is defending the nature of **true Christian authority** and **true spirituality** against distorted versions that had entered the church. His defense is not rooted in power, personality, or performance—but in the **cross**.
- Paul is under attack, and he responds with the cross as his lens.
- False teachers have infiltrated the Corinthian church.
  - They question Paul’s authority, his boldness, and his credibility.
- Their accusation can be summarized like this:
  - “Paul sounds strong in his letters, but he’s weak in person.”

They (false teachers) boast in:

- Eloquence
- Personality
- Human wisdom
- External strength

In other words, they fight with **carnal weapons**.

Paul refuses to meet them on that ground.

He does not manipulate.

He does not posture.

He does not compete.

Instead, he reframes the entire conflict.

And this is where Paul gives us a framework that applies far beyond Corinth, because the same mistake is still being made today.



## #1-READ V3 FIGHTING THE WRONG WAY

3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh.

## #1-EXPLAIN V3 FIGHTING THE WRONG WAY

- Paul acknowledges reality:
  - You live in a physical body.
  - You have real responsibilities.
  - You face real pressures.
- But the real war is not fought with physical tools.
- We *walk* in the flesh, but we do not *war* according to the flesh.
- **Illustration – Shadowboxing**
  - Some believers are shadowboxing.
    - Swinging at symptoms:
      - Arguing with people
      - Medicating pain
      - Controlling outcomes
      - Distracting themselves
- But the enemy isn't there.
- Paul says, "**YOU'RE FIGHTING THE RIGHT BATTLE THE WRONG WAY.**"

So if fleshly weapons don't work... what does?



## #2-READ V4 WEAPONS THAT ACTUALLY WORK

**CSB 4** since the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, **but are powerful** through God for the **demolition of strongholds**.

## #2-EXPLAIN V4 WEAPONS THAT ACTUALLY WORK

- Paul contrasts two kinds of weapons:
  - Carnal: human strength, manipulation, pride
  - Spiritual: God-powered, God-directed, God-sustained
- And notice the result:
  - **They pull down strongholds.**
- Not cope with them.
- Not manage them.
- Not coexist with them.
- Destroy them.

But what exactly is a stronghold?

## 🎯 #3-READ V4B UNDERSTANDING STRONGHOLDS

4 for pulling down strongholds,

**CSB 4** for the demolition of strongholds.

## 🎯 #3-EXPLAIN V4B UNDERSTANDING STRONGHOLDS

- A stronghold is not a demon behind every inconvenience.
- Biblically, a stronghold is:
  - **A fortified way of thinking that resists God's truth**
- Strongholds start in the mind:
  - A lie believed
  - A thought rehearsed
  - A fear protected
- Then they move:
  - Mind → Heart → Mouth → Life
- **Illustration – Mental Ruts**
  - Like ruts in a dirt road, every time you drive over them, they get deeper.
- The enemy doesn't need new lies.
  - He just needs you to keep believing the old ones.

So how do strongholds actually fall?

Paul tells us.

## 🎯 #4-READ V5 TAKING THOUGHTS CAPTIVE

**5 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.

**CSB 5** We demolish arguments and every proud thing that is raised up against the knowledge of God, and we take every thought captive to obey Christ."

## 🎯 #4-EXPLAIN V5 TAKING THOUGHTS CAPTIVE

- This is where Paul moves from explanation to action.
- Paul uses violent language on purpose.
  - Casting down
  - Taking captive
- Because spiritual victory requires **intentional engagement**.
- Every thought must answer one question:
  - **Does this submit to Christ?**
- If it doesn't obey Jesus, it doesn't get authority.
- Additionally, Paul doesn't say **avoid** wrong thoughts.
  - He says **capture** them.
- That tells us something important:
  - Not every thought that enters your mind is from God, or even from you.
  - Some thoughts don't arrive as attacks.
  - They arrive as **agreements**.

- **Illustration – Trojan Horse**

- The city of Troy wasn't conquered because its walls were weak.
  - It fell because deception was welcomed inside.
- The enemy didn't force their way in.
  - They offered a gift.
- The horse looked harmless. Even impressive.
  - So they pulled it inside the gates.
- But hidden inside were soldiers.
  - And once night fell, the city was destroyed from within.
- That's how strongholds work.
- The enemy rarely introduces lies that sound evil.
  - He introduces thoughts that sound **reasonable**:
    - “You deserve this.”
    - “You’ll never really change.”
    - “God understands why you can’t let this go.”

- **Examples of Agreements:**

- **1. AGREEMENTS ABOUT IDENTITY**
  - These shape how people see themselves.
    - “This is just how I am.”
    - “I’ll always struggle with this.”
    - “I’m too broken for God to really use.”
    - “Other people get freedom—this is just my cross.”
    - “If people really knew me, they’d leave.”
  - Lie beneath it: My identity is defined by my past, not Christ.
- **2. AGREEMENTS ABOUT GOD**
  - These distort how people trust Him.
    - “God understands why I can’t let this go.”
    - “If God really cared, He would’ve stopped this.”
    - “I need to protect myself—God didn’t show up last time.”
    - “God forgives me, but He’s disappointed in me.”
    - “I know what the Bible says, but my situation is different.”
  - Lie beneath it: God is limited, distant, or unreliable.
- **3. AGREEMENTS ABOUT CONTROL**
  - These often sound wise or responsible.
    - “If I don’t stay in control, everything will fall apart.”
    - “I can’t afford to be vulnerable.”
    - “I’ll deal with this later.”
    - “I’ve got this handled.”
    - “I don’t need help—I just need time.”
  - Lie beneath it: Control equals safety.
- **4. AGREEMENTS ABOUT SIN & COMPROMISE**
  - These normalize disobedience.
    - “It’s not hurting anyone.”
    - “At least I’m not as bad as I used to be.”
    - “God knows my heart.”
    - “This helps me cope.”
    - “I’ll stop once things calm down.”
  - Lie beneath it: Partial obedience is enough.

## ▪ 5. AGREEMENTS ABOUT SUFFERING & FEAR

- These keep people paralyzed.
  - “If I hope again, I’ll just get hurt.”
  - “I can’t survive another disappointment.”
  - “It’s safer to expect nothing.”
  - “I don’t want to get my hopes up.”
- Lie beneath it: Protection comes from withdrawal, not trust.

 ○ The danger isn’t the thought; it’s letting it **inside unexamined**.

○ Paul says every thought must be opened up and inspected. **Taken captive**

- Not asked, *How does this make me feel?*
- But asked, *Does this obey Christ?*

○ Because whatever you allow into your mind will eventually open gates in your life.

## • TAKING THOUGHTS CAPTIVE MEANS YOU DON’T NEGOTIATE, YOU CONFRONT.

So how do we actually live this out, day after day, when thoughts keep coming?

## HOW DO WE ENGAGE IN THE BATTLE

### 1. IDENTIFY THE STRONGHOLD

You cannot surrender what you won’t name.

Ask:

 • What thought keeps returning?  
• What lie shapes my reactions?  
• What belief do I protect even when Scripture confronts it?

### 2. CONFRONT IT WITH TRUTH

Jesus didn’t argue with Satan, He quoted Scripture.

 • Truth replaces lies.  
• Light expels darkness.  
• The Word must become your reflex, not your reference.

### 3. SUBMIT IT DAILY

This is not a one-time moment.

It’s a daily stand.

 • Not:

- “God, bless what I’m holding onto.”

• But:

- “God, I release what You already defeated.”

And that brings us to OUR response.

## CALL TO STAND: A MOMENT OF SURRENDER