

Expository Files

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EF 14.2
Feb. 2007

Front Page

They Will Not Endure Sound Doctrine
2 Timothy 4:3,4
By Jon W. Quinn

People react to truth quite differently from one another. Sometimes we even refuse to accept the obvious if we do not like it - like the overweight smoker who is told by his doctor he had better quit smoking and lose some weight. When the doctor asks, "Now, what are you going to do about it?" He replies, "I am going to find another doctor... one that smokes and is overweight."

Yes, we can always find an expert who will tell us what we want to hear - a politician or a philosopher or a preacher. And there are those who will gladly change those parts of Scripture that we may not like. Today there are many denominations scrambling to readjust their tenets to "keep up with the times", socially, morally and doctrinally. If those tenets and creeds are Biblical, they had better not be readjusted. If they are not Biblical, then they should have never existed to begin with.

And this is nothing new. Back in Isaiah's day 700 years B.C. there were people who rejected his message from the Lord choosing instead the false prophets who told them what the Scriptures call "smooth things." (Isa. 30:10). Later, Paul would ask, "Have I become your enemy because I tell you the truth?" (Gal. 4:16). The Scriptures also tell us "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled they will accumulate teachers in accordance with their own

desires; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside unto myths.” (2 Tim. 4:3,4).

God’s word is truth. Anything that contradicts it is false. Build your hopes and life on the one sure foundation. Build on the rock, the words of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Crumbs From the Table
Matthew 15:21-28
By Jon W. Quinn

“Jesus went away from there, and withdrew into the district of Tyre and Sidon. And a Canaanite woman from that region came out and began to cry out, saying, 'Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is cruelly demon-possessed.' But He did not answer her a word. And His disciples came and implored Him, saying, 'Send her away, because she keeps shouting at us.' But He answered and said, 'I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.' But she came and began to bow down before Him, saying, 'Lord, help me!' And He answered and said, 'It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs.' But she said, 'Yes, Lord; but even the dogs feed on the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.' Then Jesus said to her, 'O woman, your faith is great; it shall be done for you as you wish.' And her daughter was healed at once.” (Matthew 15:21-28; cf. Mark 7:24-30).

Jesus withdrew from the region of Galilee and went into the region of Tyre and Sidon. It was His first visit to a Gentile nation. Tyre and Sidon were located just to the north of Galilee.

The Problem

There, a Canaanite woman sought help for her demon-possessed daughter. She indicated that the effects were particularly cruel, but did not elaborate. But it was recognized as something different than a physical illness. When the cause was physical, the Lord would say so. It is not true that they were just superstitious and thought every sickness was caused by evil spirits. But some were.

Jesus' disciples asked Him to send her away. They did not care much for Gentiles. Jesus explained to her that He was sent only to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel." This refers to His personal ministry on earth, that He had been sent to preach unto Israel. The prophet Ezekiel had spoken of this: "Therefore, I will deliver My flock, and they will no longer be a prey; and I will judge between one sheep and another. Then I will set over them one shepherd, My servant David, and he will feed them; he will feed them himself and be their shepherd." (Ezekiel 34:22-23). Other references also discuss the coming of the Messiah to Israel as a Shepherd (Jeremiah 50:6,7). When sending His apostles out to preach during His lifetime, He gave them strict orders about this: "These twelve Jesus sent out after instructing them: "Do not go in the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter any city of the Samaritans; but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. "And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' (Matthew 10:5-7).

His death on the cross, however, would be for all nations, and His gospel would go forth unto all the world following His resurrection and ascension back into heaven. (Matthew 28:18-20).

Perseverance and Humility

This woman persevered, bowing down before Him, saying, "Lord, help me." Jesus replied, "It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." What a stunning thing for Jesus to say! But there was a point to be made behind it all.

She replied, "Yes, Lord; but even the dogs feed on the crumbs which fall from their master's table." Just as stunning was her reply. It is as if she does not care about anything other than that this Prophet can help her daughter and she will not be dissuaded.

A number of things happen at this point. here. First, the woman's faith is certainly tested. It will indeed take great courage and commitment to put up with this! This fine woman is going to learn something here. She is going to learn what a strong faith she has!

How much had she heard about Jesus? She was a Gentile living in a foreign land, but she addressed Jesus saying, "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David;" (vs. 22). The term "Son of David" is a Messianic term. This tells us she knew something of the promise of God to send a Savior. She

addressed Jesus as that Messiah. We are not told where she had learned this, but she is correct.

It would have been easy for her to turn away in anger or sorrow or pride. But she saw Jesus as the only hope for her daughter. She would not turn away!

And certainly His disciples would not have expected such faith from a Gentile. Their perceptions and views of Gentiles will have to change; and in time they will. As Peter, for example, would one day realize: "I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality, but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him." (Acts 10:34,35). Later, all would recognize the fact that the gospel is for all "When they heard this, they quieted down and glorified God, saying, 'Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life.'" (Acts 11:18).

The Reward of Faith

Jesus answered, "O woman, your faith is great; be it done for you as you wish." Jesus certainly knew this about the woman's faith. Great faith brings great rewards. This took courage. It took commitment. It took a spirit that refused to be deterred. Her faith was tested and passed the test. The apostles received a lesson that they would remember.

Our faith needs to have endurance as well. To endure, we must have the confidence in Jesus as this woman had. We are told, "Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised. " (Hebrews 10:35-36)

When that day was over, and this mother held her daughter in her arms, free at last from the cruel bondage she had suffered, and reflected on the events of that day, how do you suppose she felt? The Messiah had pronounced her faith as "great". He had answered her request for her daughter's healing. She had not let the others persuade her to give up. And, even at that darkest moment when it seemed as if she would not find the answer she desired, she pressed on. So, how did she feel at day's end? She had only asked for crumbs from the Master's table. She instead had received a feast. You can be sure she felt fine. It had been a very good day.

Responding to Calamity
Jeremiah 44
By Ethan R. Longhenry

Imagine yourself in the following set of circumstances: you were living in a good land that you have heard was given to your ancestors by your mighty God. You heard the stories of how God delivered your people from a terrible king, vanquished the land before your people, and constantly delivered and preserved your people. Nevertheless, in your own day a great empire came to your land, destroyed your cities and the temple of your God, and your people have either fled to neighboring countries or were exiled into the empire's homeland. In this circumstance, what would you think? How would you respond to this series of events?

This is precisely the situation that faced the exiles of Judah in and around the year 586 BCE, when Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, conquered Jerusalem and destroyed the Temple (2 Kings 25, Jeremiah 39; 52). The people of Judah for years trusted that God would never allow the heathen Babylonians to violate His Temple or profane His land (cf. Jeremiah 7:4). Nevertheless, these very things happened. How did the people of Judah respond?

Jeremiah 44 records for us two examples of responses to the events that occurred. While the context demonstrates that Jeremiah is speaking with some of the exiles who traveled to Egypt, we can be sure that the same issue is under discussion for those in Babylon and other places.

God expected a certain response from the people. He makes it extremely clear why all of these calamities came upon Judah and Jerusalem: the people did not listen to Him through His prophets, continued to worship other gods, and therefore incurred God's wrath (Jeremiah 44:1-6). Nevertheless, the exiles in Egypt continue to worship other gods, and God demands that they stop this, lest they also be destroyed (Jeremiah 44:7-15). The people, however, responded as follows in Jeremiah 44:16-19:

"As for the word that thou hast spoken unto us in the name of the LORD, we will not hearken unto thee. But we will certainly perform every word that is gone forth out of our mouth, to burn incense unto the queen of heaven, and

to pour out drink-offerings unto her, as we have done, we and our fathers, our kings and our princes, in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem; for then had we plenty of victuals, and were well, and saw no evil. But since we left off burning incense to the queen of heaven, and pouring out drink-offerings unto her, we have wanted all things, and have been consumed by the sword and by the famine. And when we burned incense to the queen of heaven, and poured out drink-offerings unto her, did we make her cakes to worship her, and pour out drink-offerings unto her, without our husbands?"

The people of Judah exiled in Egypt did not respond to the calamity according to God's desire; remaining in their darkened minds, they rather ascribed the calamity to the end of worshipping the Queen of Heaven and not because the people forsook the LORD. One can understand some of the "logic" involved; after all, it was only in the time of Hezekiah, who returned to worshipping the LORD only, that the Assyrians attacked (2 Kings 18-20), and the time of Josiah, the next such reformer, saw the beginning of the end of Judah (2 Kings 22-25). After all, these same Israelites are the ones who constantly rejected the message of Jeremiah in the land (cf. Jeremiah 26:10-12, etc.); should we be surprised when they continue to not listen?

The Scriptures and history, however, are the final judges of these people: all such Jews who worshipped other gods were killed or simply become a part of the populations around them and are lost to history (Jeremiah 44:20-30). Other Jews, more repentant and humbled, did indeed return to the land of Israel in the time of Cyrus the Persian and afterward (cf. Ezra 1-2). Despite all of the idolatry in the land before the Exile, the historical and Biblical evidence is clear that no such idolatry continued when the people returned to the land.

As we can see, many of the Jews would not be humbled in the sight of the LORD but instead found justification in their idols; many other Jews were humbled in the sight of the LORD as He intended (Jeremiah 44:1-6). When we suffer from calamity, how do we respond? Will we, as many whose minds are darkened by the world, blame God, find a reason to deny or reject the faith, or in some other way turn to some modern idol (cf. Romans 1:21)? Such persons are lost forever! On the other hand, we can learn from calamity and be strengthened in our faith, being more like James and finding reason to rejoice in the testing of our faith (James 1:2-4). We must

remember that God chastens those whom He loves (Hebrews 12:6-11). Let us turn our minds toward God and away from all idols!

For godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation, a repentance which bringeth no regret: but the sorrow of the world worketh death, (2 Corinthians 7:10).

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About Our Singing
Colossians 3:16
By Warren E. Berkley

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord,” Colossians 3:16

I have a special affection for vocal music, where words of faith are affirmed and celebrated. There are two secondary reasons for this. I grew up in a home where “Daddy sang bass and Momma sang tenor.” And in my teenage years into my army years, I was a musician.

The primary reason for my affection for spiritual songs is the teaching of the Scriptures. From the Mount of Olives to the prison in Philippi to the letters of Paul to churches, I have discovered singing as a God-given means to teach, admonish, encourage and help us express our praise to God. Music has this power to take our thoughts and emotions in the direction of the lyrics. When our songs express our common faith, there is an element of harmony we enjoy, far beyond alto and tenor.

Singing spiritual songs is something we can do by ourselves, or with a few others – even one other. James 5:13, “Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms,” can be applied by an individual just like the first phrase in that verse, “Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray.” In the prison in Philippi, Paul and Silas “were praying and singing hymns to God,” (Acts

16:25). I am thankful God gave me this means of praising Him and cleansing my mind. It is something I can do virtually anywhere, without accompaniment, audience or perfect pitch.

It is not about talent! The precise four-part harmony of our practice is relatively modern. While it may be argued that one should do his best at anything done before God, there is no rating, grade or ranking applied by God to our singing (as to musical sound). I understand the need to do something well, but I cannot find anything in the Scriptures requiring a certain level of talent or “sounding good” that is a demand. Some of the best singers I’ve known didn’t “sound good” relative to our typical musical judgments. But their sense of joy, reverence and sincerity made them good singers to me.

It may help to keep in mind, music appreciation & style is not an objective standard, but strongly related to culture and taste. What sounds good to Americans who were raised in the 1930’s rural communities, may sound strange to children of the 70’s raised in suburban communities. Song writers have a challenging task, to find common ground for singers who may be very different in their talent, taste and musical knowledge. Today there are Christians all over the world, singing the same truths we sing, without instrumental accompaniment, but with styles and sounds they are comfortable and familiar with in their culture (which often does not involved four-part harmony).

Our singing will never fulfill its’ purpose, if we are ignorant of the God we are singing to. Singing really begins when God is in your heart. You cannot properly and reverently extol and praise a Being you do not personally know. We ought to have this acquaintance with God: “I cried aloud to the Lord, and he answered me from his holy hill. I lay down and slept; I woke again, for the Lord sustained me,” (Psa. 3:4,5, ESV). This is the heart of a good singer, and this is the heart we can have, by the activity of our faith in Christ.

Song Leaders are not performers or competitors. In the 1950’s, I went to “Singing School” under teachers like M. Roy Stevens and Will Slater. In teaching boys how to learn to be song leaders, they always put lyrics, spirituality and sincerity at the highest place. These men taught potential song leaders about the dignity of worship, the exuberance that must be conveyed; but likewise, the humility of one’s service to God in voice. Just as

the good preacher must get out of the way and let people see the Cross. The good song leader must get out of the way and let people sing to God.

The human voice is a wondrous product of God's perfect creative wisdom. When the voice God gave us is combined with the good heart we can have by the activity of our faith in Christ, the results sound good to God. May we never allow a man-made instrument to intrude into this pure process, nor a contemporary thirst for audience pleasure to corrupt it.

"He leadeth me! O blessed thought! O words with heavenly comfort fraught! What-e'er I do, where-e'er I be, still 'tis God's hand that leadeth me." (Joseph H. Gillmore)

By The Way . . .

Layman Coleman (Noted Presbyterian author and scholar): "It is generally admitted that primitive Christians employed no instrumental music in their religious worship."

Charles H. Spurgeon (A Baptist preacher, preached for twenty years in the great Metropolitan Baptist Tabernacle in London, England. Twenty thousand persons heard him every Sunday): "Instruments of music were never used in his tabernacle."

John Calvin (Founder of Presbyterianism): "Musical instruments in celebrating the praises of God would be no more suitable than the burning of incense, the lighting of lamps, and the restoration of other shadows of the law."

Adam Clarke (Methodist Commentator): "I am an old man, and an old minister; and I here declare that I never knew them (i.e. musical instruments) productive of any good in the worship of God; and have had reason to believe that they were productive of much evil. Music, as a science, I esteem and admire; but instruments of music in the house of God I abominate and abhor."

Contentment
1 Timothy 6:6-8
By Rickie Jenkins

“Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content” (I Timothy 6:6-8, NKJV).

Contentment is from the word that suggests the idea of sufficiency that something is enough. Paul's use of the term in I Timothy suggests, “that

inner God-given sufficiency which does not depend on material circumstances” (Duane Litfin). Jesus implies the importance of contentment when He warned, guard against greed (Lk. 12:15). Contentment has to do with recognizing the sufficiency of what we have.

If we learn to be content, we avoid the “someday’s” of life and enjoy today. You know, “Some day I’ll have a new house, then I’ll be happy.” “Someday I’ll be married, then I’ll enjoy life.” “Someday I’ll join the perfect church, then I’ll start to grow.” Because contentment flows from the heart, it allows us to enjoy the here and now. Real contentment does not feed on circumstances or wishful thinking.

If we learn contentment, we will be free to appreciate the accomplishments of others and be free of envy. Contentment frees us from the burden of competition and comparing. The more content we are with our own lives, the more we can celebrate one another’s successes.

If we learn to be content we will also be more grateful. Those who lack contentment do not realize what it means to be truly thankful. By focusing on what we do not have, we lose sight of all the blessings, spiritual and material, God has provided. Gratitude is the cornerstone of effective faith.

Simply put, godliness plus contentment equals great gain. That gain is more than material wealth destroyed by moths and rust and stolen by thieves (Matt. 6:19). It is the imperishable treasure of heaven that inner peace and satisfaction of being right with God and walking in His footsteps alone can bring (Matt. 6:20-21; Prov. 3:13-26).

Contentment is not a formula. There is no pill we can swallow to instantly achieve it. Instead, it is a by-product of a close walk with God.

The Judgment Day
Topical Study
By Jon W. Quinn

The Father's calendar is already marked; the day upon which the final judgment will take place has already been circled (Acts 17:31).

I am risking being thought of as ignorant, but I must confess that I do not know nearly as much as some people claim they know when we will be called to stand before the Judge of the earth. Even if you were to ask me for what they call a "ballpark" figure I couldn't do it. Whenever I have read the writings of men and women who claim to have discovered that secret, I find that when I compare what they say to the Bible that they have taken liberties; stretching a passage here, ignoring a passage there and misapplying a passage when such is needed to make it fit. I know that I am on safe ground when I say "Heaven and earth will pass away, but (Jesus') words will not pass away. But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone." and "Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour." and "For this reason you be ready too; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will." (Matthew 24:35,36; 44; 25:13). That's how Jesus put it so I don't feel so bad now that I do not know what so many others claim to know.

A pamphlet proclaims on the front in big letters "GOD'S JUDGMENT DAY IS NEAR" and "RAPTURE! IN AUTUMN 1992" and "JESUS IS COMING AGAIN IN 1999". Interestingly enough, it presented pretty much the same arguments as did the booklet I had received several years earlier, "'88 REASONS WHY THE RAPTURE COULD BE IN 1988". And earlier still, "THE LATE GREAT PLANET EARTH" announced in 1970 that "these things" could take place within 40 years of May 14, 1948, the date that the modern state of Israel became a nation.

Misapplied Signs For A Different Judgment Day

"He said to them, 'It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority.'" (ACTS 1:7). There is much talk about recent earthquakes, hurricanes, and wars. These are supposedly signs that Jesus' return will be soon. The Bible does not teach this. The ideas that there will be signs come from a misapplication of some of Jesus' words. But no one will misapply what He said as long as they notice all of what He said.

The premillennial theory takes some verses out of their context in Matthew 24 to say that there will be signs of Jesus' final coming. "For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes...when you see these things, recognize that He is near, standing right at the door." (Matthew 24:7,33).

Yes, these are signs, but not of the approaching final judgment of the world. They were instead signs Jesus gave to His first century disciples about Jerusalem's destruction by the Roman army in their generation! Jesus said He would come in judgment on the city for their rejection of Him. He did so through the armies that destroyed Jerusalem in 69 A.D. Listen to Jesus' own words as He explains that the fulfillment would come in first century Jerusalem, not in the 20th century world. "And Jesus came out from the temple and was going away when His disciples came up to point out the temple buildings to Him. And He answered and said to them, 'Do you not see all these things? Truly I say unto you, not one stone here shall be left upon another, which shall not be torn down...Truly I say unto you, this generation shall not pass away until all these things take place.'" (MATTHEW 24:1,2;34). To lift these signs out of first century and apply them to our own century is to misapply them.

Angels, The Resurrection and Judgment

There will be a trumpet and a shout like none you've ever heard! We can hardly imagine what the voice of an arch angel might sound like as he announces that judgment has come (1 Corinthians 15: 51, 52; 1 Thessalonians 4:16). Jesus shall return with His mighty angels. What do angels look like? We'll all be finding out! We'd best be on their friendly side when we do (Matthew 25:31; Jude 14-15)! Sometimes we sing a song about the crucifixion which says, "He could have called 10,000 angels" to deliver Him from the hands of His enemies. Those angels will be with Him next time! Several passages mention their role in the final judgment as being that of dividing of the righteous from the unrighteous and an execution of judgment (Matthew 13:41; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).

The resurrection will occur when Jesus returns so those judged righteous can return home with Him, not so they can remain here with Him (1 Corinthians 15:22-26; 50; John 14:1-3). When He returns, His people will ascend into the air to meet the Lord (1 Thessalonians 4:15-17). Men today with their theory of the millennium have days beyond the "last day" (John 6:44), another trumpet blast after the "last trumpet" (1 Corinthians 15:52), and time beyond "the end" (1 Corinthians 15:24). We are in the last age now. If we die previous to Jesus' coming, we will not awaken to another age as far as this world is concerned. We will awaken from death for the final, universal judgment of all (1 Corinthians 10:11; Hebrews 9:26-28).

A Judgment Seat Without Partiality

All people of all times will stand before the judgment seat of Jesus (Matthew 25:31-33; 2 Corinthians 5:10). There we must give an account of ourselves (Romans 14:11-12). God will judge men through His Son according to their work and without respect of persons (1 Peter. 1:17).

Where the Bible stresses that all men will be judged by the same standard, and if saved, they will be saved on the same basis; through the belief in the gospel of Christ (Romans 1:16), many forms of premillennialism suggest an automatic conversion of certain people who had rejected the gospel previous to the Lord's return. They will be saved simply because of their ethnic identity as Jews. But this cannot be true, else God would be judging with partiality (Acts 10:34,35). Paul made it quite plain that Jews who believed the gospel are saved; but those who did not are lost (Romans 10:1-3).

The Greatest Judge of All Presiding

Jesus Christ is the One ordained by God to judge all men (ACTS 10:42). He is an absolutely righteous judge (2 Timothy 4:8). This judgment will occur at His second coming. (2 Timothy 4:1). Many things influence our judges in our courts today. They can be deceived; they are only human and make mistakes. They may not be fair, showing favoritism to those of their own nationality, race or color. Jesus won't be doing that. All will be judged fairly and without exclusive advantages over others. He will bring to light the hidden things of darkness and will judge every man righteously.

Jesus pictures those on His left hand receiving a sad verdict; read it now and allow it to encourage you to so live that you will not hear it then (Matthew 25:41; 7:23). Those on the right hand will receive wonderful news; read it now to encourage you to so live so you will also hear it then (Matthew 25:21,34). What will that great verdict be for you? God is just. He has told you about how to receive the verdict you desire.

Plan of Salvation By Jon W. Quinn

Plan #1

Announced by the apostles, inspired by the Holy Spirit, to new believers in Christ who asked what they must do:

"Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."
(ACTS 2:38)

Plan #2

On the back page of a tract, sinners were urged to pray this prayer to be saved. This prayer is not found in the Bible; nor were alien sinners commanded to pray for their forgiveness.

The Sinner's Prayer:

"O' Lord, I accept that I am a sinner and that Jesus died for my sins. I now accept Him into my heart as Lord and Savior asking for your mercy and forgiveness in His name. Amen."

The editors of Expository Files are happy with plan #1 and thankful to the God of all grace for it. We cannot recommend Plan #2 at all, but will change our minds when this prayer can be shown to us in the Bible.

Final Page

Our Warfare
2 Corinthians 10
By Warren E. Berkley

The apostle Paul was familiar with controversy and in his experience there were many who opposed what he preached and did. Sometimes, instead of directly attacking the gospel, opponents would go right after Paul, the man. They would say things about him, accuse him, misrepresent him; in an effort to undermine his work and advance their own agenda.

In this case (2 Cor. 10) Paul responds to the charge that he was bold when writing letters from a distance, but timid when actually present with people

(see verses 1, 10). Paul responds by affirming he is pleading with people by the meekness and gentleness of Christ – but that meekness should not be confused with timidity.

And he says – “though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh.” That brings us to verse 4. “For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds.”

One simple analysis of this verse would be, there are two things here:

Paul identifies the kind of weapons he used. Then Paul identifies the purpose of those weapons. The kind of weapons – not carnal, but mighty in God. The purpose of the weapons – pulling down strongholds.

First, consider the kind of weapons. Not Carnal; so Paul did not use physical violence, psychological manipulation, a campaign of lies about his enemies, political power, money, or sectarian loyalty.

In holy warfare against sin and error, Paul used only the mighty weapons of God: teaching, preaching, the influence of good works, prayer, persuasion and encouragement of faithful people.

The enemies of the gospel, the false apostles and deceitful workers, wanted to attack Paul regarding his methods. They had no cause, no evidence. Paul said, “though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh.” Then he said, “the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds.”

ESV: “The weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but have divine power to destroy strongholds.”

Now in our case, Christians today are to be militantly opposed to sin; we are to fight the good fight of faith and stand against the wiles of the devil. But we must refuse to use carnal weapons in this warfare.

For example - we cannot hold people at gun point and take them to the baptistery.

I heard a story that was reported to me as true about a farmer out in the country of west Arkansas, who one day decided his teenage boy would be

baptized. He had had enough of his boy's sinful ways. So in a moment of impulse, he took the boy up physically and carried him out to the stock pond. They both went into the water, fighting with each other – all you could see was flying elbows and blood. And the mother reported, there was this torrent of foul language from the boy. Finally, his father immersed him. Nobody's sin was remitted. The boy didn't enter into Christ; he didn't become anything but a wilder boy!

The weapons of our warfare are not carnal. And, we are defeated by other kinds of carnal weapons that may not be physical. I gave us a working list of examples a moment ago. I listed things like: psychological manipulation . . . a campaign of lies about our enemies . . . political power . . . money, or sectarian loyalty. I tell you we need to learn this: Even when our message is right, our methods need to be right too! We can defeat ourselves, damage the name of Christ's cause, divide churches and put stumbling blocks before people, when we resort to the methods of the world.

We should be able to say what Paul said: "we do not war according to the flesh." "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal."