

# THE EXAMINER



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## The Weapons Of Our Warfare - By Edward O. Bragwell, Sr. - Fultondale, Alabama

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled (**2 Cor. 10:3-6**).

### We Are At War

When one becomes a Christian, he declares war on the forces of Satan. He wants to be able to say, "I have fought a good fight" (**2 Tim. 4:7**). He struggles with his own fleshly weaknesses to keep doing what he believes to be right. He has fights against systems of thought that make one feel justified in doing wrong. He must expose these systems for his own benefit and for the benefit of those whom he is trying to teach. I like to be positive in my teaching and preaching (oral and written), but I

can't always be. There are thoughts that must be "cast down" and "pulled down" before we can "bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ." There is no place in the Lord's army for cowards; the "cowardly" will be in hell (**Rev. 21:8**). But, carnal minds have warped views of things. Carnal-mindedness, characteristic of spiritual immaturity, had been a long standing problem at Corinth (**cf. 1 Cor. 3:3**). They had a carnal view of strength and weakness -- courage and cowardice. Paul deals with this in our text. His opponents measured strength by outward or fleshly appearance (**v. 7**) and so influenced the Corinthians. In effect, they accused him of being a weakly coward -- one who talked big away from them, but would fold up with timidity when face to face (**v. 10**). He ironically identifies himself to them as the one "who in presence am lowly among you, but being absent am bold toward you." If that had really been so, then he would have fought

after the flesh, making bold statements against sin from a distance, but melting when having to face them close up. It is easier to be bold from safety of distance or even from behind a curtain of anonymity than to look the accused in the eye. Such is beneath the dignity of those who war after the Spirit and characteristic of those who war after the flesh.

As the immature carnal minds often do, they also mistook longsuffering for weakness. They said, in effect, "If Paul is strong and we are wrong, why does he not do something about it?" Paul was "ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled." (The only punishment that I know that Paul had a right to give would be that of "deliver(ing) one unto Satan"-- **cf. 1 Cor. 5:5; 2 Cor. 2.6; 1 Tim. 1:20**.) Those who "war according to the flesh" are quick to issue an ultimatum to the opposition, demand immediate compliance, or face immediate consequences. They see any other course as being weak--either unable or unwilling to take action. Delay did not mean weakness. Paul could and would act in due time, but he had good reason for delay--to give those who could be salvaged opportunity to "fulfill their obedience" (**v. 6**). He had the authority. But, it was "for building you up, and not for casting you

down" (**v.8**, ASV). He would use his authority to punish (or discipline) the disobedient (as had already been done in the case of the immoral man -- **1 Cor. 5**) when he came (**v. 11**), after he had salvaged those that could be persuaded to obey.

### "Carnal Weapons"

"Carnal" weapons are used by those who "war according to the flesh." In context, "carnal" likely refers to tactics used, rather than having reference to swords and the like. It is from *sarkikos*. "from *sarx*, flesh, signifies (a) having the nature of the flesh, i.e., sensual, controlled by animal appetites, governed by human nature, instead of by the Spirit of God, **1 Cor. 3:3**; having its seat in the animal nature, or excited by it. **1 Pet. 2:11**, 'fleshly;' or as the equivalent of 'human,' with the added idea of weakness, figuratively of the weapons of spiritual warfare, 'of the flesh' (A.V. 'carnal'), **2 Cor. 10:4**; or with the idea of unspirituality, of human wisdom, 'fleshly,' **2 Cor. 1:12**" (Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, W.E. Vine). Those who "war after the flesh" use various fleshly devices to win a commitment to their side. Misrepresentation, gossip, slander, cheap verbal shots, intimidation, innuendo, flattery, sophistry, overstatement, officious meddling,

prejudicial statements, base appeals to the fleshly side (fear, passion and pride), careful concealment of real cost of commitment, may be powerful weapons-but they better serve the purposes of those who war after the flesh than the Lord's church. In earthly conflicts, men may say, "My country, right or wrong, still my country"-so, the country's position must be defended right or wrong. Such a partisan spirit can be found in the church. Brethren can be more interested in preserving "our position," maintaining a "united front" and forcing folks to get in step with that, rather than searching for, defending and propagating truth and bringing people into the fold with Christ. This, too, is warring after the flesh. Yet, one has to watch that he does not let fleshly pride of independence, the desire to show that "he is his own man," to govern his spiritual warfare. He may abandon good scriptural reasoning that has proven to be sound over the years because he does not want to appear to parrot "the party line" or "church of Christ position." He wants all, especially the brotherhood, to know that he is not one of those weaklings who cannot think for himself. He wars after the flesh just as much as the man who blindly follows a "brotherhood tradition."

We should not use carnal tactics because: (1) they are not right, (2) they do not work, (3) they are counter-productive to our goal, and (4) we have a more powerful and effective weapon -- in the persuasive power of truth openly and simply presented.

### The Strongest Weapons Of All

Paul said the "weapons of our warfare" are "mighty in God." He did not need fleshly tactics to gain advantage over opposition; he had the advantage in the persuasive power of the gospel with its ability to "pull down strongholds, cast down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God." There is no stronger way of stopping the mouths of those who "teach things that they ought not" than "by sound doctrine both to exhort and convince the gainsayers" (Tit. 1:9-11). This is hard for the immature, carnal mind in the church to understand. The mature Christian chooses weapons carefully. He understands "he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules" (2 Tim. 2:5). He knows that he must "walk in the flesh," while resisting the ever-present temptation to "war after the flesh." This is not easy, because fleshly means often seem more direct and faster in getting at sin. If the opposition uses such means against us, why should we

not be allowed to use the same weapons in a good cause? So, sincere and zealous, but immature brethren often find what appears to be the quickest and most direct attack on the problem of internal sin and error very attractive -- without stopping to consider whether or not the "weapon" is the kind a Christian ought to use. The fact that one's objective is righteous does not justify trying to achieve it by unrighteous means. I would like to wipe out abortion. I believe the Scriptures condemn it. But, bombing abortion clinics and/or harassing their patrons are not "weapons" that I, as a Christian, have at my disposal. I would like to see every mechanical instrument of music removed from the buildings of those professing Christianity. But, I cannot recommend the methods of a good sister in Kentucky that I read about. In the 1800s when one was brought into the building where she attended, she slipped in after dark and took a chopping axe to the thing! I would like to see all religious error and sinful conduct removed from the church. I believe I must keep fighting to that end (cf. **Jude 3; Heb. 12:3,4**). But, I must be careful that I do not allow my hatred for sin -- and I must abhor sin -- to provoke me into methods that more benefit Satan's army than the Lord's. \*\*\* Concluded in Next Weeks Bulletin \*\*\*

## IF IT'S NOT HERE - REFUSE IT!

### LIVE & WORSHIP AS PLEASE

FLESHLY LUSTS - 1 PET. 2:11; ROM. 6:19-23;  
8:5-8; 1 COR. 6:9,10; GAL. 5:19-21; 6:8  
UNGODLINESS - 1 PET. 4:18; JUDE 4,8  
WORSHIP - MT. 15:8,9; JO. 4:23,24

### OPEN FELLOWSHIP

MARK THEM - ROM. 16:17,18  
NO FELLOWSHIP - EPH. 5:11; 2 JO. 9-11

### HUMAN NAMES

C. B. M. P. N. H.  
DISCIPLES - CHRISTIANS - ACTS 11:26;  
26:28; 1 PET. 4:16  
CHURCH - ROM. 16:16



JO. 12:48

ROM. 10:17; GAL. 1:6,9; 1 PET. 4:11

### POPULAR DOCTRINES

CONSCIENCE AS A SAFE GUIDE -  
ACTS 23:1; 24:16;  
LIP SERVICE - MT. 15:8,9; LK. 6:46  
FAITH ONLY - JS. 2:21-24  
CAN'T FALL - LK. 8:13; GAL. 5:4; 1 COR. 9:27

### MAJORITY RULE

TRUTH NOT DETERMINED BY MAJORITY -  
MT. 7:13,14; 22,23; GAL. 1:10; 1 TH. 4:1

### RELIGIOUS TITLES

CLERGY & LNTY - MT. 23:8-10  
"REV." "DR." "THE PASTOR" - ROM. 1:1;  
JS. 1:1; 2 PET. 2:1

BE SAFE - INSIST ON BIBLE AUTHORITY FOR WHAT YOU ACCEPT!!