

Walking in Fullness of Life and Power Through Christ – Part 4

Weapons of Warfare: Spiritual Power for Obedience and Confronting False Teachings

1. Brief recap from last two meetings

- We dove into **Eph. 4:17-32 (Living as children of light)** which talked about ridding yourselves of the old self, being renewed in your minds and putting on the new self. We talked about “putting on the new nature.” In this study we are going to dive deeper into the new nature a believer receives at salvation and what it means to put on this new nature. (**this may be part 5**)
- We talked about being properly focused which we will touch on again in this study.
- We talked about being intentional in regards to what we are told to “put off” and to “put on.” I have attached some good homework on this.

2. Walking out this New Life (Continued)

a) Two meetings ago we talked about being **properly dressed**, last meeting we talked about being **properly focused**. Being properly dressed and properly focused is one of the ways that we can “put on our new nature.” Let’s review the properly focused scriptures again and then I want to focus on the last item on this list: **2 Cor.10:4-6**.

- **Heb. 12:1-2 (ESV)** – *“Lay aside every weight, run with endurance and looking to Jesus.”*
- **Col. 3:1-2 (NIV)** – *“Set your hearts on things above, set your minds on things above.”*
- **Mat. 6:33 (KJV)** – *“Seek ye first the kingdom of God.”*
- **2 Cor. 4:18 (NLT)** – *“Don’t look at the troubles we can see now; rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen.”*
- **Ps. 16:8 (ESV)** – *“Set the Lord always before you.”*
- **Prov. 4:25-27 (AMPC)** – *“Let your eyes look directly ahead [toward the path of moral courage]. And let your gaze be fixed straight in front of you [toward the path of integrity].”*
- **1 Cor. 15:58 (NKJV)** *“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.”*
- **1 Cor. 16:13-14 (AMP)** *“Be on guard; stand firm in your faith [in God, respecting His precepts and keeping your doctrine sound]. Act like [mature] men and be courageous; be strong.”*
- **Eph. 6:13 (NASB)** *“Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist on the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.”* (NLT) *“put on every piece of God’s armor.”* (NIV) *“Put on the full armor.”*
- **** 2 Cor. 10:4-5 (NKJV)** – *“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 the obedience of Christ”*. ~ First: What are the weapons spoken of here?

The verse itself does not explicitly list the weapons, but commentaries and related scriptures provide insight into their nature. Reading the scriptures in full context suggests the weapons are spiritual, not physical, and include: **The Word of God, Prayer, Faith, Sharing the Gospel** (power to transform souls) and the **Fruit of the Spirit**. One commentary put it this way regarding the fruit of the Spirit: "*The fruit of the Spirit manifested can be a weapon against the enemy: love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and self-control (see Gal. 5:22-23). It drives the devil crazy when you walk in love or remain at peace.*"

b) Now I want to talk about **2 Cor. 10:6**. V. 6 seems a bit harsh: "*and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.*"

Let's read all of 2 Cor. 10:4-6 (NKJV/AMP) and talk about it.

Multiple commentaries:

- **What's Paul saying in v. 6?** He's fighting a spiritual battle against ideas and people opposing the gospel in Corinth. He's got the authority (and divine power) to deal with disobedience—like those questioning his leadership—but he's holding off. Why? He wants the Corinthians to get on the same page with him first, fully embracing obedience to Christ. Once that's solid, he'll address the **troublemakers**. (unbelievers and/or false teachers) - We can see this in v. 5 "*casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God*".
- **Why is it confusing?** The phrase "once your obedience is complete" sounds conditional or future-focused, and "punish" feels harsh. But it's less about vengeance and more about restoring order in the church. Paul's tone is confident yet patient—he's not rushing to crack down.
- **How does it fit?** Think of it like a general securing his troops' loyalty before disciplining deserters. Verses 3-5 describe the battle (tearing down false ideas); verse 6 is the cleanup phase, ensuring everyone's aligned with Christ. Paul was dealing with false teaching and confused messages due to the Roman culture/audience Paul addressing.

c) Let's read all of **2 Cor. 10:1-10 (AMP)** to help understand v. 6. Also note v. 5 in the AMP. "*We are destroying sophisticated arguments and every exalted and proud thing that sets itself up against the [true] knowledge of God.*" This is what Paul was up against.

d) A little more commentary on **vs 6** in regards to disobedience and obedience shall be made full: "**Disobedience**" here is among those who opposed Paul's apostolic authority, especially as a writer of God's Word via the Holy Spirit. Paul was ready to confront their disobedience to Christ. The enemies of Christ must suffer the consequences of holding to viewpoints that are not biblical. (what are the consequences?) The apostle intended to forthrightly deal with the intruders by confronting them with the Word. i.e. boldness.

e) **"Your obedience shall be made full"** ... This does not mean that "the church's obedience is here yet to come"; but that it was to be made COMPLETE when Paul had disposed of "some" who were enemies of the truth. There is in this passage an implied admission that their obedience, even at that time, was approaching fullness. The thing that would complete it was Paul's determination, or "readiness," to destroy the influence of the "some" who were still holding out against the truth. Paul was trying to protect the church from false teachings and/or confused teachings mixing in what Paul was teaching and what the Roman culture was teaching.

f) This ties into **Rom. 8:13 (NKJV/AMP) – This also ties into “obedience”.**
(NKJV) – *“but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. ”*
(AMP) – *“But if [you are living] by the [power of the Holy] Spirit you are habitually putting to death the sinful deeds of the body, you will [really] live forever.”*
Rom. 8:14 is important to read with vs 13:
(NKJV) *“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. ”*
(AMP) *“For all who are allowing themselves to be led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. ”*

g) You can also see Paul's heart for the sinner in **2 Cor. 2:3-11. (ESV)** “Note: **V. 6** specifically says: *“For such a one, this punishment by the majority is enough.”* Let's read all of **2 Cor. 2:3-11** **(NKJV).** (sub-title in NKJV “**Forgive the Offender.**” Paul is referring to someone who has been disciplined by the Corinthian church, and now he urges them to forgive and restore this person. It is interesting that this is also **v. 6** and is related to the **v. 6** in **2 Cor. 10:6.** – OK, now back to **2 Cor. 10:1-10.**

h) I also wanted to point out **2 Cor. 10:3-4 (AMP)** *“For though we walk in the flesh [as mortal men], we are not carrying on our [spiritual] warfare according to the flesh and using the weapons of man.”* **There is a great commentary on this passage from the Believer's Bible Commentary:**
*“This verse tells us what is meant by “strongholds” in verse 4 (“pulling down strongholds”). Paul saw himself as a soldier warring against the proud reasonings of man, **arguments which oppose the truth.** The true character of these arguments is described in the expression **against the knowledge of God.** It could be applied today to the **reasonings of scientists, evolutionists, philosophers, and religionists who have no room for God in their scheme of things.** The apostle was in no mood to sign a truce with these. Rather he felt committed to bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. All men's teachings and speculations must be judged in the light of the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul would not condemn human reasoning as such, but would warn that we must not allow our intellects to be exercised in defiance of the Lord and in disobedience to Him.”* Paul was coming up against those who would not believe the truth and/or where false teaching that were teaching another Gospel among the believers. - ~ Talk about the Roman Culture at the time for better context.

3. Where we are heading... Let's explore what being a new creation really means.

- **Old sinful nature:** [Unrenewed self] - [The entire nature of man without the Holy Spirit]
[What we were prior to salvation] - [The old man]
- **New Nature:** [Born Again] - [New Creation] - [Renewed in knowledge]
[In Union with Father, Son, and Holy Spirit] - [The New Man]
- In case you want to read ahead: **Rom. 6:6-18; 8:3-4, 13:4; 2 Cor. 5:17; 1 Pet. 1:3-5, 2:22; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Jn. 3:5; 1 Pet. 3:18; Col. 3:9-11; Eph. 4:22-24** (full context Eph. 4:17-32). Pick your Bible version, but I highly recommend reading in the (**NLT, NKJV, NASB, ESV and AMPC**).

Homework:

The phrases "put off" and "put on" are often used in the context of a transformation from the sinful nature to a life that reflects Christ's character. These instructions are directed toward believers who are called to live out their new identity in Christ. Some passages (e.g., **Col. 3:5, Jam. 1:21**) use terms like "put to death" or "put away" instead of "put off," but the intent is similar, emphasizing the rejection of sinful behaviors.

The "put on" commands often imply adopting Christlike qualities or relying on God's provision (e.g., the armor of God, love, or the new self).

Here is a handy putt off/put on list:

Put Off the Old Self, Put On the New Self

Put Off: The old self (or old man), which is corrupt through deceitful desires.

Put On: The new self (or new man), created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

Ephesians 4:22–24

Put Off Falsehood, Put On Truthfulness

Put Off: Falsehood (lying).

Put On: Speaking the truth in love.

Ephesians 4:25

Put Off Anger, Put On Kindness and Forgiveness

Put Off: Anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk.

Put On: Compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, and forgiveness.

Colossians 3:8, 12–13

Put Off Bitterness and Evil Behavior, Put On Love and Unity

Put Off: Bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, slander, and all malice.

Put On: Kindness, tenderheartedness, forgiveness, and love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

Ephesians 4:31–32

Put Off Filthiness, Put On the Armor of God

Put Off: All filthiness and rampant wickedness.

Put On: The word of God (implied as righteousness and truth) and the full armor of God (in a related context).

James 1:21

Put Off Sexual Immorality and Impurity, Put On Holiness

Put Off: Sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness (idolatry).

Put On: A heart of holiness and devotion to God (implied through sanctification).

Col. 3:5

Put Off the Works of Darkness, Put On the Armor of Light

Put Off: The works of darkness (sinful deeds like orgies, drunkenness, sexual immorality, sensuality, quarreling, and jealousy).

Put On: The armor of light and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Rom. 13:12–14

One scripture that brings out this intentionality I am talking about in this study is in **2 Pet. 1:5-8 (AMPC)**. You will notice the phrase: "exercising your faith to develop". This is intentionality. Putting your faith into practice. 2 Pet. 1:5-8 (AMPC) summarized: "...*adding your diligence [to the divine promises], employ every effort in exercising your faith to develop virtue: [exercising] Virtue to develop Knowledge, [exercising] knowledge to develop self-control, [exercising] self-control to develop steadfastness, [exercising] steadfastness to develop brotherly affection and [exercising] brotherly affection to develop Christian love.*" We have gone over this passage as a group many times in the past but it is very applicable to this study.

All of this is intentionality. Things we are to do, to develop Christian character while at the same time allowing the Holy Spirit to help us with this process of sanctification, this process of "being conformed into the image of Christ". Conformed and transformed into the image of Christ:

Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:18; Col. 3:10; Gal. 4:19; Gal. 4:19.

"Conformed" in **Rom. 8:29** is *summorphos* (Greek), meaning to be shaped or fashioned into the same form. "Transformed" in **2 Cor. 3:18** and **Rom. 12:2** is *metamorphoō* (Greek), implying a change in form or nature, often used for the process of sanctification. Both terms support the idea of becoming like Christ, but "conformed" (as in **Rom. 8:29**) is more specific to taking on His image.

We believers are progressively being transformed into His image - **2 Cor. 3:18 (AMP)** "...*are progressively being transformed into His image from [one degree of] glory to [even more] glory, which comes from the Lord, [who is] the Spirit.*"

Additional bonus homework:

Paul was dealing with a culture that was steeped in Stoicism and Epicureanism. Understanding these ideas might help with the context of **2 Cor.10:4-6**.

Stoicism: A Hellenistic philosophy founded in Athens (c. 3rd century BCE) by Zeno of Citium, teaching that virtue (wisdom, courage, justice, temperance) is the highest good and leads to a life of rational self-control. Stoics believe in living according to nature's rational order, accepting fate calmly, and managing emotions to achieve inner tranquility (ataraxia), regardless of external circumstances.

Epicureanism: A Hellenistic philosophy founded by Epicurus (341–270 BCE), emphasizing pleasure as the highest good, defined as the absence of pain (aponia) and mental disturbance (ataraxia). Epicureans advocate simple living, cultivating friendships, and avoiding fear of gods or death, believing gods exist but are distant and uninvolved in human affairs.

For some additional context of **2 Cor. 10:4-6** I proposed this question to Grok 3 in DeepSearch mode pulling from full context Biblical text, several Bible commentaries, Bible studies and historical documents.

*"What was Roman culture like at the time when **2 Cor. 10:4-6** was written and exactly who were the troublemakers Paul was addressing in this passage?"*

To address your question about Roman culture at the time **2 Corinthians 10:4-6** was written and the identity of the "troublemakers" Paul was addressing, let's break it down systematically.

1. Roman Culture at the Time of **2 Corinthians (circa 55–57 CE)**

2 Corinthians is generally dated to around 55–57 CE, written by the Apostle Paul during the mid-1st century CE, under the Roman Empire's rule, likely during the reign of Emperor Nero (54–68 CE). Here's a concise overview of Roman culture relevant to the context:

- **Political and Social Structure:** The Roman Empire was a highly stratified society with a strong emphasis on patronage, honor, and public reputation. Cities like Corinth, where Paul's audience resided, were bustling, cosmopolitan hubs. Corinth, a Roman colony in Greece, was a prosperous commercial center with a diverse population, including Romans, Greeks, Jews, and others. It was known for its wealth, trade, and cultural pluralism, but also for social competition and moral laxity, partly due to its history and the influence of the nearby Isthmian Games and temples like that of Aphrodite.
- **Religion and Philosophy:** Roman culture blended Greek, Roman, and local religious practices. Pagan temples, mystery cults, and philosophical schools (e.g., Stoicism, Epicureanism) were prevalent. In Corinth, traditional Greco-Roman worship coexisted with Jewish synagogues and emerging Christian communities. Rhetoric and public oratory were highly valued, and skilled speakers (rhetors) held significant influence, often judged by their eloquence and charisma.
- **Jewish and Christian Context:** Early Christian communities, like the one in Corinth, operated within this pluralistic environment. They faced tensions with both Jewish synagogue leaders (who often opposed Christian teachings) and Gentile converts influenced by pagan practices or secular philosophies. The Corinthian church, founded by Paul around 50–51 CE (Acts 18), was a mix of Jewish and Gentile believers, which led to cultural and theological clashes.

- **Roman Attitudes Toward Christians:** At this early stage, Christianity was not yet widely persecuted by Roman authorities, as it was often seen as a sect within Judaism. However, Christians faced social suspicion for their monotheism and rejection of pagan rituals, which could disrupt civic harmony.

2. Context of 2 Corinthians 10:4-6

The passage in 2 Corinthians 10:4-6 reads (NIV):

"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. And we will be ready to punish every act of disobedience, once your obedience is complete."

- **Literary Context:** 2 Corinthians is a deeply personal letter where Paul defends his apostolic authority against critics in the Corinthian church. Chapters 10–13, often called the "severe letter," are particularly intense, as Paul responds to challenges to his leadership. He contrasts his spiritual approach with worldly standards of power and persuasion
- **Cultural Influence on the Passage:** In Corinth, eloquence, wealth, and social status were measures of authority. Paul's opponents likely criticized him for lacking these qualities (e.g., his unimpressive speech or appearance, 2 Cor. 10:10). Paul counters by emphasizing spiritual weapons—truth, faith, and divine power—over worldly rhetoric or force, aligning with the countercultural nature of early Christianity.

3. Identity of the "Troublemakers" Paul Was Addressing

The "troublemakers" in 2 Corinthians 10:4-6 are not explicitly named, but scholars generally agree they were a group within or influencing the Corinthian church who challenged Paul's authority. Based on the text and historical context, here are the likely candidates:

Rival Missionaries or "Super-Apostles":

- Paul refers to "super-apostles" (2 Cor. 11:5, 12:11) who boasted of their credentials, possibly Jewish Christian missionaries who claimed superior apostolic authority. These individuals may have emphasized their rhetorical skills, spiritual experiences (e.g., visions, 2 Cor. 12:1), or adherence to Jewish law, contrasting with Paul's focus on grace and the cross.
- They likely criticized Paul's lack of polish, his physical presence, or his refusal to accept financial support (2 Cor. 11:7–11), which was a common expectation for teachers in Greco-Roman culture.

Judaizers or Jewish Christian Opponents

- Some scholars suggest these troublemakers were Judaizers, similar to those in Galatians, who insisted Gentile Christians follow Jewish customs (e.g., circumcision, dietary laws). In Corinth, they may have argued that Paul's gospel was too lenient, undermining Jewish traditions.
- Evidence: Paul's defense of his Jewish credentials (2 Cor. 11:22) suggests his opponents claimed Jewish heritage to bolster their authority.

Pagan or Secular Influences:

- Some Corinthian believers, influenced by Greco-Roman culture, may have valued charismatic leaders or philosophical wisdom over Paul's humble, suffering-based ministry. The "strongholds" and "arguments" (2 Cor. 10:4–5) could refer to intellectual or cultural objections to Christianity, such as skepticism about the resurrection or monotheism

Internal Factionalism:

- The Corinthian church was prone to division (1 Cor. 1:10–17). Some members may have formed cliques, favoring other leaders (e.g., Apollos or Peter, 1 Cor. 1:12) or local figures who challenged Paul's authority, perhaps seeing him as an absentee leader.

4. Specifics of Paul's Response

In 2 Corinthians 10:4–6, Paul addresses these troublemakers indirectly by:

Rejecting Worldly Standards: He contrasts "weapons of the world" (e.g., rhetorical flair, social status) with spiritual weapons empowered by God to dismantle false ideologies or "strongholds."

Targeting False Arguments: The "arguments" and "pretensions" likely refer to the teachings or boasts of his opponents, which elevated human wisdom or legalism over the gospel.

Asserting Authority: Paul warns of disciplining disobedience (v. 6), signaling his intent to confront these troublemakers directly when he visits Corinth, possibly to restore unity and correct false teachings.

5. Conclusion

At the time of 2 Corinthians (mid-50s CE), Roman culture in Corinth was a melting pot of Greco-Roman, Jewish, and emerging Christian influences, with a strong emphasis on rhetoric, status, and religious pluralism. The troublemakers Paul addresses in 2 Corinthians 10:4–6 were likely rival missionaries or "super-apostles," possibly Jewish Christians or local leaders, who challenged his authority by boasting of their credentials, eloquence, or adherence to Jewish law. Paul counters their influence by emphasizing the divine power of his message and his apostolic mission, urging the Corinthians to align with the true gospel.