

# Weapons

## 2 Cor. 10:2-4

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#### I. Playing Games v. 2

- i. Enemies - his opponents to mutinous resisters holed up in the city of Corinth and miscalculating that their ramparts and battlements will protect them.
  - ii. Paul must primarily have in view the forms of argument used by the rival missionaries and their Corinthian supporters
  - iii. What is distinctive about 10:3–6 is (1) that the struggle is not simply “against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Eph. 6:12) but in particular against his rivals at Corinth
  - iv. Furthermore, Paul’s apostolic mission, if this is in view, is directed primarily to Gentiles, whilst, if he is thinking of the rival missionaries, these people, although Jews, are not unbelievers in their own eyes or in the eyes of the Corinthians.
- b. Tactics
- i. Rather, this change to a verb denoting warfare not only gives the lie to the accusation that he is timid and weak
  - ii. More plausibly, if σαρκικά has further connotations, Paul might have in mind the discreditable, ‘all too human’, methods of missionary propaganda which in 4:2 he claimed to have renounced. This is a possibility if the image of warfare relates to his apostolic mission in general, but if it refers only to the assertion of his authority amongst the Corinthians it would be less appropriate.
  - iii. It is interesting to discover that the Corinthians’ perspective of their apostle was quite the opposite and that Paul feels compelled to convince the Corinthians that he is not timid but bold. The picture that some have of a combative, cantankerous Paul needs to be reevaluated

#### II. War v. 3

- a. Walk Flesh
  - i. Walk
  - ii. Flesh - with physical limitations, life here on earth
    1. In the phrase ἐν σαρκί it refers to life on earth in its totality, the universal human condition shared by believer and non-believer alike. Every human, by definition, lives “in the flesh,” that is, “in

the world.” The phrase *κατὰ σάρκα*, on the other hand, means “by human methods” or “with human resources,” and points forward to the next verses which describe the divine resources and methods of warfare. The negative affirmation in v. 3b is asyndetic, but its juxtaposition with a positive statement in v. 3a shows that the two statements are antithetical and *περιπατοῦντες* is concessive (“though we live”).

2. The weapons of the world are learning, personal influence, impressive credentials (1 Cor. 1:26), rhetorical polish (1 Cor. 2:1), and the like. These things Paul had discounted and discarded (Phil. 3:4–8). He did not wage war as the world does or use their weapons.
3. At the same time Paul is hinting at his ability to deal with opposition. In responding to the allegation he picks up each element of the charge but indulges in a word-play on *σάρξ* and when negating *κατὰ σάρκα* he substitutes the verb *στρατεύομαι* for *περιπατέω*.

b. War According to the Flesh

i. War - **to engage in a conflict, wage battle, fight**

ii. Flesh

1. He then returns to the negative meaning of “flesh” from the previous verse to insist that he does not wage war according to the flesh by using misguided human standards
2. To wage war according to the flesh” (NIV “to wage war as the world does”) means that one relies on flimsy human resources that are void of any divine power and that one is likely to resort to shameful, underhanded means to gain the desired victory. Paul’s methods are not fleshly methods. He does not rely on cunning or deception to insure that he will win. His power is God’s power, which means that he fights according to God’s rules of engagement. He has an arsenal of powerful, divine weapons at his disposal
3. It does not apply to living according to misguided human standards but to live a human existence that is subject to all the limitations that our corporeality places upon us. To live in the flesh” means that he possesses no supernatural powers but is a frail clay vessel that is wasting away and given over to death (4:7–10, 16; 6:4–5). Paul concedes he walks in the flesh, which means that he is subject to bodily weakness and thorns in the flesh.
4. For the weapons of our campaign are not fleshly.’ He probably refers to the artifices which his critics said that he employed in gaining converts.

### III. Weapons v. 4

#### a. Weapons - of a Christian's life as a battle against evil

##### i. Warfare

1. The depiction of the Christian life as a military operation is a common theme in Paul. Rom. 13:12; 1 Cor. 9:7; 2 Cor. 6:7; Eph. 6:11–17; Phil. 2:25; 1 Tim 6:12; Phlm. 2.
  - a. That a Christian's life is warfare is often pointed out by St Paul (6:7; 1 Thess. 5:8; 13; 1 Tim. 1:18; 2 Tim. 2:3, 4).
2. invites comparison with Paul's later expression ἡ πανοπλία τοῦ θεοῦ (Eph. 6:11, 13). The two phrases are complementary, for "the weapons we use in our warfare" (τῆς στρατείας, possessive genitive) are supplied by God, while "all the armor supplied by God" (τοῦ θεοῦ, subjective genitive) is for use in Christian warfare. In 6:7 τὰ ὄπλα τῆς δικαιοσύνης τῶν δεξιῶν καὶ ἀριστερῶν ("the weapons supplied by righteousness for the right hand and the left") may be the sword for offense and the shield for defense, but here in 10:4 the weapon that is powerful in achieving God's purposes (θεῶ) of promoting the knowledge of God (cf. v. 5) and producing obedience to Christ (v. 5) is probably the gospel of Christ. Although the "military campaign" (στρατεία) in which Paul was engaged at present was against opposition in Corinth, it was merely part of his wider mission and ministry of discharging his commission to preach and defend the gospel, so that vv. 3–5 (but not v. 6) should not be interpreted narrowly as having relevance only to the Corinthian situation.

##### ii. Of the Flesh

1. The military image is developed, as Paul describes his 'weapons', first negatively, than positively. The negative description, 'not merely human', must primarily mean that his instruments of spiritual warfare are not weak or ineffective, since σαρκικά is opposed to δυνατά, 'powerful'

#### b. Divinely Powerful

##### i. Divinely- mighty before God - *weapons powerful in the sight of God*

1. He has referred previously to the power of God working through him with weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left (6:7). From references elsewhere in the Corinthian correspondence, we can assume that he has in view the truth of the gospel, epitomized in the word of the cross (1 Cor 1:18, 23–24; 2:5; 2 Cor 6:7; see Rom 1:16), and the knowledge of God (2:14; 4:6).

2. Paul wields his weapons 'for God', fights 'in God's cause' Paul fights in God's service, to destroy opposition to knowledge of God and to secure obedience to Christ.
    - a. Perhaps the force of this 'for God', i.e., 'in God's service' is to be understood with reference to the later description of the apostle's opponents as intermediaries of Satan (11:14–15).
    - b. Proof that Paul was not waging his war with merely human resources (v. 3b) is now given (note γάρ). The weapons he uses to fight with are not forged by human hands but have divine potency.
  3. Other spiritual weapons referred to in the New Testament such as prayer, divine wisdom, and holy conduct may also be assumed to be part of his arsenal.
    - a. As Paul develops his argument in these chapters, however, he reveals that in God's hands even his weakness becomes a mighty weapon through which God works powerfully—perhaps because it is so disarming.
  4. the efficacy of his weapons we have righteousness as our weapon both to attack and to defend ourselves' 2 Cor 6:7
- ii. Powerful
1. The weapons Paul used were the proclaimed Word of God and prayer (Eph. 6:17–18), weapons with divine power. In dependence on God (1 Cor. 2:4–5) these weapons, frail by worldly standards, are able to demolish the arguments and every pretension of the gospel's foes
- c. Destruction of Fortresses
- i. Destruction – to tear down
    1. Paul's 'weapons' are for the purpose of demolishing strongholds
  - ii. Fortresses - **a strong military installation, fortress- Possibly Prov 21:22, Tower of Babel**
    1. Paul says that the aim of his warfare is the destruction
    2. Paul assures them that he has the capacity to destroy strongholds. He does not identify what these high bulwarks represent, except to say that they are related to arguments that oppose the knowledge of God. These bulwarks may therefore refer to the assortment of intellectual arguments that humans construct in an attempt to stave off the truth of the gospel. More specific to the Corinthian resistance, they may refer to conceptual barriers they erected to rationalize their defiance of Paul's moral and theological correction.
    3. 'To the demolition of strongholds,' the fortresses which hinder the success of the campaign, i.e. all the prejudices and evil practices which resist the influence of the Gospel.