

In 2 Corinthians 9 we learned the importance of being generous to meet the needs of others, and how your attitude and heart, rather than the quantity of the gift, is the most important aspect of how you give. Now in chapter 10 Paul moves on from the idea of generosity, but continues to talk about the importance of our attitudes. Christian life is about more than just correcting behaviors but rather about shaping the way we think. My oldest son is at the age where we can shape his thinking and teach him how to make the right choices instead of just correcting his behavior. Likewise, as Paul says, it is important as Christians for God to shape the way we think. When it comes to our money, relationships, education, and career, is our thinking shaped by Scripture or by the way the world thinks? Most likely it's a mixture of both. But often the way the world thinks about things is at odds with the way Scripture tells us to think, and there is a necessary conflict. Paul says that this is a battle we are all called to fight.

The background of this chapter is that when Paul left Corinth, other people took over his role. These people questioned his authority. They accused him of being different in person than how he sounded in his letters (vv. 1-2, 11). We see that Paul's letters are forceful and authoritative, but in person he seemed unimpressive. Here Paul argues that he is the same when he is away as he was when he was with the Corinthians, and that he's the only one trying to shape their thinking to be in line with the Lord's. His challengers are only trying to shape others to be like them.

In v. 3-6 Paul uses the imagery of siege warfare to describe this battle over our minds. In a siege the first step is to breach the wall, which requires siege weapons. The second step is to engage and capture the enemy within the walls. And the final step is to judge and punish the enemy. When it comes to the battlefield of the mind, there are the same three steps. Paul describes the walls as arguments and pretensions that set themselves up against the knowledge of God (v. 5). The world tries to capture our minds and sets up these false ways of thinking as a barrier for us. Therefore we must break these walls with our weapons. This weaponry is analogous to the armor of God in Ephesians 6:13-17. All of these pieces of armor are actually alluding to passages in the Old Testament (Isaiah 11:1-5, 49:1-3, 52:7, 59:17, and Psalm 46:8-

11), all of which speak of the Messiah. Putting on the armor of God means letting the Messiah consume you. It means putting on Jesus. It means being in Christ and having Him cover you. Likewise, Jesus is the way in which we break these strongholds. Our spiritual knowledge of Him is our weaponry.

Then, in v. 5 Paul says that we must take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. Once the barriers are scaled we must capture our thoughts and make them align with Scripture. We must be critical of our thinking. It is a constant battle we must be engaged in. For example, for parents, how do you value your children's education? Where does this philosophy come from? I value that my son does well on his spelling tests. But where does that come from? Is it because God values spelling? Is it because the world values education, or because my parents valued it? In the end I concluded that it was not from the Bible, but that it wasn't against Scripture either. Many ways of thinking come from our culture, from our upbringing, or from the influences of the world. They may not all be against Scripture, but sometimes they will be. We have to be on guard and be critical of how we think, so that we can catch ourselves when we are thinking in a way that is diametrically opposed to how God wants us to think.

The third step is to judge and punish the enemy. We must recognize the battle in our minds. Any thought that is opposed to Scripture must be recognized and corrected. It is a struggle. Living a believer's life in an unbelieving world is always going to be a struggle because the wisdom of the world is opposed to that of Jesus. When the battle is finished, the end result is obedience to Jesus. Titus 1:15-16 and 1 Timothy 4:12 tell us that those who know God live a godly life. That is the fruit of this struggle.

So how can we tell when our thinking is in line with that of Christ? When you sail a boat you must constantly course correct by looking at a fixed point in the distance and steering towards it. Likewise we must constantly course correct through church, Bible study, fellowship, worship, and prayer. We encourage consistent participation in church because if you only come occasionally you may look back at your life and find it has strayed from Christ. Let it be our goal to take captive every thought for Jesus and align our values with His.