

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE WEAPONS OF OUR WARFARE (2:1–5)

For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. (2 Cor. 10:3–4)

As chapter 2 begins, the book of Nahum addresses the reader. Instead of dialogue, intricate word pictures allow us to witness Nineveh’s siege. We watch as the city scrambles to prepare its defenses. We see the attack commence. Then—almost instantly—the city falls. What could possibly have brought Nineveh to its knees so quickly? One man could—a “scatterer” (2:1). The greatest military power that the world had ever seen gives way before one of God’s servants. How? In this chapter, we seek to answer this question, but not out of mere curiosity. The answer has profound implications for each of us.

NAHUM AND BABEL

Explaining how Nineveh fell to the scatterer begins in ancient history—even from Nahum’s perspective. Nahum chose the word *scatterer* intentionally; it links Nineveh’s coming judgment to one of the distant past. He meant to take us back to [Genesis 10–11](#). After the flood, Noah’s descendants travelled east, settled in Mesopotamia, and began to build cities.

Cush fathered Nimrod; he was the first on earth to be a mighty man. He was a mighty hunter before the LORD. Therefore it is said, “Like Nimrod a mighty hunter before the LORD.” The beginning of his kingdom was Babel, Erech, Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. From that land he went into Assyria and built Nineveh, Rehoboth-Ir, Calah, and Resen between Nineveh and Calah; that is the great city. ([Gen. 10:8–12](#))

Nineveh was founded in a time of united human rebellion.

When the flood ended, God commissioned Noah to “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth” ([Gen. 9:1](#)). In direct rebellion against this command, Noah’s descendants decided to build “a city and a tower with its top in the heavens” ([Gen. 11:4](#)). They agreed together, “Let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth” ([Gen. 11:4](#)). Rather than trusting God and obeying his word, these early peoples sought security in numbers and buildings and the reputation that came from both. Nineveh was always a city that lived to make a name for itself by defying God. In Genesis, “the LORD came down” ([Gen. 11:5](#)), and he would do so again in Nahum ([Nah. 1:2–8](#)). In Genesis, God “dispersed them” ([Gen. 11:8](#)). Many centuries later, Nineveh would receive the same treatment. The word “dispersed” ([Gen. 11:4, 8](#)) and the name “scatterer” ([Nah. 2:1](#)) come from the same Hebrew verb. We are meant to read [Nahum 2](#) through the lens of Babel.

ONE MAN

God begins his assault on the world's greatest and most heavily fortified city with a single man. The irony may be lost on us, but Nahum's audience would have expressed shock, awe, or disbelief that God would send one man against this fortress. In the years since Sennacherib had moved the Assyrian capital to Nineveh, the wealth of the ancient Near East had poured into the city. Assyrian armies had plundered endlessly, and tribute streamed to Nineveh year after year from subjugated foes. Three successive kings—Sennacherib, Esarhaddon, and Ashurbanipal—had used the slaves, money, and material from pillaged nations to expand, embellish, and fortify Nineveh. "Nineveh was an almost impregnable fortress. On the low hills surrounding three sides of the city forts guarded the approaches to the metropolis, while the Tigris flowed by on the west. Beyond its massive walls the city was guarded by a system of moats and canals, and beyond the latter, outworks added further defenses."¹ More importantly, in Nahum's time, Assyria's military needed no walls. No force had withstood them for one hundred years. Who could go against Nineveh and not only survive, but scatter the city?

The New Testament gives us the answer. Jesus came against the nations of the world and established his kingdom. Ironically, the prophet Daniel had explained this to the very man responsible for Nineveh's downfall. One night Nebuchadnezzar had a dream that troubled him. Daniel interpreted the dream and told Nebuchadnezzar that God would destroy the kingdoms of the world and scatter them to the wind. "And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever" ([Dan. 2:44](#)). The rock that demolished the kingdoms of the world was Christ.

ROBBING THE STRONG MAN'S HOUSE

Jesus once asked, "How can someone enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? Then indeed he may plunder his house" ([Matt. 12:29](#)). By beginning the question with the word *how*, Jesus indicated that success against the strong man required using the proper method. In order to plunder the strong man, one must first incapacitate him.

The New Testament tells the story of Jesus' battle with Satan. According to [Revelation 12](#), this battle began with a war in heaven at the time of Christ's birth. Then, at age thirty, Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness to confront his ancient enemy. For the first time in history, a human being completely withstood Satan. Never before had a human survived the temptations of flesh, glory, and power without sin. After this, Jesus and his followers began a systematic dismantling of Satan's kingdom. Evil spirits shrieked in terror before the Lord's Christ. Even humble fishermen made Satan's servants flee. The major blow, however, came at the cross. There Jesus drank the full cup of God's wrath and entered into hell. But on Sunday he rose. He conquered death and hell. He had

¹ Elizabeth Achtemeier, *Nahum–Malachi*, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1986), 18.

bound the strong man. Just before Jesus ascended, he told his disciples that they now had his authority. He sent them into all the world to continue plundering Satan's fortress. This they did. In the decades after Jesus' death, the church spread rapidly. The prophecy of [Daniel 2](#) was coming to pass. A fortress much more formidable than Nineveh crumbled before this band.

Today Christ's church has the same charge. We are to advance against Satan's strongholds, knowing that they must fall. Unfortunately, many today wonder how this can be true. In much of the Western world, Christianity seems in decline. Scholars label Europe as post-Christian. Moral standards in the United States have changed rapidly in recent years. Those of us in the West must ask whether we truly have the power to stand against Satan's kingdom, let alone destroy it.

The answer to this question still stands: the Bible clearly says that Christians have the necessary power to make Satan flee. The problem is not that the Bible is insufficient. The Bible is sufficient. The church in the West has a methodological problem. We want to accomplish Jesus' Great Commission without using his method. Jesus charged his church to take up the cross. We were supposed to endure lives of dishonor before a watching world, sacrificing ourselves for the sake of his glory. As we became weak, God would respond. He would do his work. Through our lives and deaths, those around us who hated God would be confronted with his holiness, their sin, and his grace. The Holy Spirit would bless our work, take our broken lives, and multiply our seed as it fell to the ground and died ([John 12:24](#)). Instead, we chose a different path. We would be cool. We would be relevant. We would show the watching world that they could keep their lives as-is and add Jesus to them. Instead of using the methods of the apostles, we adopted worldly marketing techniques and increased the size of our buildings, and the salt lost its saltiness.

Let me put it another way. In [Job 41](#), God describes to Job the strength of Leviathan. He says in verse 8, "Lay your hands on him; remember the battle—you will not do it again!" In the Old Testament, Leviathan carries the double connotation of giant serpent and spiritual enemy ([Ps. 74:13-14](#); [Isa. 27:1](#)). Whether in the physical or in the spiritual realm, Job stood no chance against this creature.

Why then do we believe that sound systems, giant TVs, and sports fields will be effective in dismantling Satan's kingdom? How will huge edifices, coffee shops, and entertaining speakers win spiritual victories? "For still our ancient foe doth seek to work us woe; his craft and pow'r are great; and, armed with cruel hate, on earth is not his equal."² You may object that none of these things are bad. I ask only that you consider the weapons you use. If you go to confront an enemy who is immeasurably more eloquent, powerful, shrewd, tactical, experienced, and ancient than you, why would you choose buildings and TVs? What are the methods that your church uses to "lay your hands on" Satan? How are you going to destroy his kingdom? You must choose carefully,

for though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. ([2 Cor. 10:3-4](#))

If we are honest, we have judged the methods of Christ too costly. We have sought to be Christians and win the world for Christ without living the shameful life that Christ requires. Jesus plainly says,

² Martin Luther, "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God," 1529; trans. Frederick H. Hedge, 1853.

“Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:27). We cannot be cool or honored or respectable in the world’s eyes if we want to follow Christ. Jesus told his disciples, “I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you” (John 15:19).

HUMILITY

I have chosen in this chapter to focus on only one aspect of Nahum 2:1–5: the means by which we may demolish a stronghold. For the sake of brevity, I will examine only five of the means that God has given us for this task: humility, prayer, the Holy Spirit, fasting, and Scripture. We begin with humility because two Bible passages promise that Satan will flee before a humble Christian:

“God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. (James 4:6–7)

Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith. (1 Peter 5:6–9)

The contrast with Job 41:8 could not be stronger. This terrifying, amazing, ancient being flees before Christians who have humbled themselves before God. Paul tells us that “we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places” (Eph. 6:12). According to James and Peter, only a humble person stands any chance in such a contest.

Tragically, Christian leaders of all sorts tell us, “Don’t pray for humility, you just might get it.” Yes, if you pray for humility, God will honor that prayer. Yes, having your pride wrenched from you will be an excruciating experience. Notice the similarity between the words *excruciating* and *crucified*. “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Gal. 2:20). God commands this. You must humble yourself; you must crucify your flesh. If you do not humble yourself now, God will do it at the judgment.

The haughty looks of man shall be brought low,
and the lofty pride of men shall be humbled,
and the LORD alone will be exalted in that day.

For the LORD of hosts has a day
against all that is proud and lofty,
against all that is lifted up—and it shall be brought low. (Isa. 2:11–12)

You see, humans are delusional creatures. David asks us, “How long will you love vain words and seek after lies?” (Ps. 4:2). Our pride comes from insanity. We seek after and embrace lies that tell us that we do not need God, that we can handle life on our own.

Let me pause here for another illustration. As I mentioned before, my father builds assisted-living homes. His firm tries to purchase prime real estate in urban areas. This requires zoning approval from the city council. His projects have often been controversial because some believe that the city should not designate prime real estate for elderly care. I do not wish to discuss the pros and cons of zoning laws, but only to show that we refuse to acknowledge that we will get old and decrepit. We somehow think that frail, elderly people have done something wrong to end up in this condition. Yet the reality is that, unless the Lord returns, most of us will end up like them. “The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away” (Job 1:21). He gave you a body. He gave you health. He gave you money. He gave you friends, family, and skills. He will take them all away. You cannot keep them. Your looks and talents, your health and wealth—everything that you have came from God. If you take pride in any of those things, you live in a delusion that you somehow deserve them. You did not earn them. They are gifts. To take pride in any of this makes you delusional. You may like your fantasy world more than the one in which you depend upon God’s grace for all things. If God is merciful, he will rescue you from the delusion. His judgment would be to leave you in your insanity.

We cannot fight Satan without humility, for without humility we cannot depend upon God. If we do not depend upon God, Satan will not flee. He will laugh, strategize, and destroy us in time. We cannot love God without humility, for only humility will allow us to see how much God has done for us. Paul charges us to “earnestly desire the higher gifts” (1 Cor. 12:31). Surely humility ranks as one of the highest. It also ranks as one of the least desired.

PRAYER

Humility will naturally lead to prayer. Prayer does not depend on discipline or righteousness. It depends on desperation. A humble person knows his or her need of God. A proud person sees prayer as an obligatory Christian duty of little effect. As Jonathan Edwards says, a person’s private prayer life reveals the true state of his soul. According to Edwards, a true convert

sees himself still to be a poor, empty, helpless creature, and that he still stands in great and continual need of God’s help. He is sensible that without God he can do nothing. A false conversion makes a man in his own eyes self-sufficient. He saith he is rich, and increased with goods, and hath need of nothing; and knoweth not that he is wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. But after a true conversion, the soul remains sensible of its own impotence and emptiness, as it is in itself, and its sense of it is rather increased than diminished.³

Conversion means that God has converted someone. God has changed a proud, hateful heart into one that desires God above all else. Edwards goes on to say that with conversion a person acquires new desires. God becomes the ultimate desire of the heart. Out of longings for things that only God can fill comes a desperation to have God give himself. This person will pray. The self-sufficient person has no need of prayer, apart from the pride of having accomplished the prayer. Do you pray in private? If you

³ Jonathan Edwards, “Hypocrites Deficient in the Duty of Prayer,” (sermon, June 1740), available online at <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/edwards/sermons.hypocrites.html>.

do not, Edwards has strong words: “If you have left off calling upon God, it is time for you to leave off hoping and flattering yourselves with an imagination that you are the children of God.”⁴ If you do not pray, you believe yourself more capable than God is of handling your needs. You also do not primarily desire the things that only God can give. Your heart longs for earthly things, not for the treasures of heaven.

No meaningful spiritual victory comes without perseverance in prayer. Jesus told two parables to drive home this point. In the parable of the persistent widow ([Luke 18:1–8](#)) and the parable of the friend at midnight ([Luke 11:5–8](#)), Jesus taught that one must struggle in prayer over a period of time to achieve results. If our time, talent, and money can win the world for Christ, we need not pray; we need only recruit more wealthy and talented people. If the world lies in bondage to an evil spiritual power that will yield only to obedient and weak servants of a crucified king, we must pray. One of the most eloquent statements of this came from a man who won spiritual victory after spiritual victory in inland China—one of the spiritually darkest places on earth at the time. Hudson Taylor wrote to an aspiring missionary, “We understand North Honan is to be your field; we, as a mission, have tried for ten years to enter that province from the south, and have only just succeeded. It is one of the most anti-foreign provinces in China.... Brother, if you would enter that province, you must go forward on your knees.”⁵ These spiritual victories demand much from those who would win them. No such victory can be won without persevering in agonizing prayer, asking that God would pour forth his Spirit and break the powers of hell that currently reign. If we are so foolish as to take on “that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan” ([Rev. 12:9](#)) without prayer, the consequences will be horrific.

FASTING

Some of John the Baptist’s disciples came to Jesus with this question: “Why do we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?” ([Matt. 9:14](#)). Jesus responded by saying, “Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast” ([Matt. 9:15](#)). Jesus expected that his disciples would fast. The Sermon on the Mount provides another evidence of this. In the middle of the sermon, Jesus talks about the motive for three spiritual activities: giving, praying, and fasting. In each case, Jesus says that our reward will depend upon the heart behind the actions. Those who give, pray, and fast so that others will see their righteousness will receive no further reward. Those who give, pray, and fast out of a desire to please God will receive rewards from God. By including fasting with prayer and giving, Jesus demonstrated that fasting should be part of the normal Christian life.

I bring this up because God has provided fasting as a weapon against Satan. While the Bible makes it clear that fasting done as a religious exercise accomplishes nothing ([Isa. 58](#); [Zech. 7:1–7](#); [Matt. 6:16–18](#)), the Bible also teaches that fasting done out of a hunger for God accomplishes its purpose. We see fasting as a precursor to powerful moves of God throughout the Bible. Moses fasted for forty

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Rosalind Goforth, *How I Know God Answers Prayer: The Personal Testimony of One Life-Time* (Philadelphia: Sunday School Times, 1921), 15–16.

days while he received the Ten Commandments ([Deut. 9:9–18](#)). This fast resulted in God’s revealing his law to his people and the world. Elijah fasted for forty days when he fled from Jezebel ([1 Kings 19:8](#)). When God spoke to him, he gave Elijah instructions for overthrowing Ahab’s dynasty and training new prophets in Israel. Ezra fasted in mourning over Israel’s sin ([Ezra 10:6–17](#)). This fast brought about Israel’s repentance regarding intermarriage with pagan peoples. Nehemiah fasted over the condition of Jerusalem ([Neh. 1](#)). This fast resulted in the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the repentance of its inhabitants. Esther and the Jews fasted for three days to save the Jewish people ([Est. 4:15–17](#)). Daniel undertook two partial fasts ([Dan. 1; 10](#)). These fasts resulted in God’s imbuing him with the wisdom that would allow him to understand mysteries and to prophesy the coming of Christ. Anna worshiped in the temple “with fasting and prayer night and day” ([Luke 2:37](#)). Because of this, God allowed her to see his Christ and to prophesy regarding him. Jesus fasted for forty days before facing Satan in the wilderness ([Matt. 4:1–11; Luke 4:1–13](#)). This fast empowered him to overcome Satan and begin his ministry. This partial list shows that God has ordained fasting as a precursor to spiritual power and breakthrough.

I want to consider one last example in more detail, because this one has particular relevance to Nahum and to our situation today. In the days of the early church, the church of Antioch gathered to pray and fast. Note the result:

Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a lifelong friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off. ([Acts 13:1–3](#))

We live on the other side of this event. We know the remarkable expansion of the gospel that came through Paul’s missionary efforts. We tend to attribute much of this to Paul’s natural talents. God, though, waited for the church to fast. Antioch’s first fast revealed God’s will. The second fast set that will in motion. The Holy Spirit did not allow Jesus to begin his ministry until he had fasted. The Holy Spirit did not allow Paul to begin his ministry without fasting either. The Bible does not give us an equation. Fasting will not guarantee victory. The Bible does teach us to fast. It also gives numerous examples of satanic strongholds that fell after God’s people fasted. If you desire to see victory over the satanic power in this world, I encourage you to ask God for the ability and desire to fast.

THE HOLY SPIRIT

The early church faced a daunting task. When Jesus ascended, the church numbered “about 120” ([Acts 1:15](#)). Jesus had commissioned them to take the gospel to “all nations” ([Matt. 28:19](#)). From the perspective of worldly wisdom, they could have had no expectation of fulfilling this command. The Jewish community in Jerusalem had shouted for Jesus’ crucifixion. The Roman world revered Greek philosophy and participated in pagan ritual. Fortunately for us, these first believers did not have the option of relying on reputation, money, and eloquence. Because of this, they had to rely on

God's methods. Also, they had clear instructions from Jesus not to take matters into their own hands. Jesus' disciples had spent years walking with and learning from Jesus. They had witnessed and performed miracles. And yet, according to Jesus, they were not equipped for the task ahead of them. Jesus "ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, 'you heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now'" ([Acts 1:4–5](#)). In reference to these verses, Hudson Taylor once asked, "Since the days before Pentecost, has the whole church ever put aside every other work and waited upon Him for ten days, that [the Spirit's] power might be manifested?... We give too much attention to method and machinery and resources, and too little to the source of power."⁶ Taylor's words stand today. Rather than realizing that we have no hope apart from the movement of God's Spirit, we often rush into Satan's territory without the power that Jesus prescribed.

It may be argued that since Jesus spoke to his disciples before Pentecost, and since we now live after Pentecost, the need to wait for the Spirit no longer pertains to us. You may be wondering if I am propounding a second baptism of the Spirit. I believe that baptism of the Holy Spirit comes upon a believer at his or her conversion. I do not believe that we need a second blessing. What we do need is to depend upon the Holy Spirit, and that is something that most of us in the Reformed tradition have done a miserable job of. Let me illustrate this in two ways. First, if we met for coffee and I asked you to tell me all that you know about God the Father, how much could you tell me? If I then asked you to tell me about Jesus, how long could you talk? If I then asked you to teach me the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, what would you say? If you are like most people whom I have encountered in Reformed churches, the discussion of the Holy Spirit would not take long. We hold that "there are three persons in the Godhead; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory" ([WSC 6](#)). The doctrine that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are equal in power and glory, however, is not usually reflected in our knowledge of, and dependence upon, the Holy Spirit.

The second illustration comes from Reformed creeds. I have a book titled *Reformed Confessions Harmonized*. It puts seven confessions and catechisms in columns. This enables the reader to look up a specific doctrine and compare what the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Second Helvetic Confession, the Canons of Dort, the Westminster Confession, the Westminster Shorter Catechism, and the Westminster Larger Catechism say about it. For instance, if you want to compare their teachings about the Lord's Supper, you turn to pages 220–29 and compare the teachings side by side. The book has forty large pages on the Ten Commandments. If you were to look at the section on the Holy Spirit, you would find one lengthy sentence from the Belgic Confession, one question from the Heidelberg Catechism, and one question from the Westminster Larger Catechism. That's it. Of the two pages that *Reformed Confessions Harmonized* dedicates to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, the vast majority is white space.⁷

⁶ J. Hudson Taylor, "[The Source of Power for Christian Missions](#)," *The Missionary Review of the World*, 13.1 (1900): 516.

⁷ Joel R. Beeke and Sinclair B. Ferguson, eds., *Reformed Confessions Harmonized* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 26–27.

You may think I am not being fair. Each of these seven creeds discusses the Holy Spirit. I agree that they do. But they do not dedicate sections to him. I want to be clear. I believe that these documents provide phenomenal doctrinal teaching and are among the best theological works ever written. I also greatly value their teaching on the Lord's Supper and the Ten Commandments. I do not criticize these sections or question whether they deserve the pages. I also recognize that Reformed theology and Reformed theologians emphasize the necessity of the Holy Spirit's role in salvation in a way that other traditions have not. But while we say that the Holy Spirit is essential to our Christian lives, we often neglect the Spirit in our teaching. This book is not the place to correct this slight. I only wish to bring it to your attention and to encourage you to search the Scriptures regarding the Holy Spirit. Also, I commend Hudson Taylor's words to you again. We need to devote more of our effort to crying out for the Holy Spirit and waiting upon him for the power to do ministry.

SCRIPTURE

When Jesus was tempted in the wilderness, he adopted a remarkable strategy. Satan attacked him with worldly wisdom, but he responded only with Scripture. As in the garden of Eden, Satan argued on the basis of human reason. Jesus knew better than to debate Satan on those grounds. The world judges Scripture to be foolish (1 Cor. 1:18), but God considers the world's wisdom to be foolish (v. 20). If we try to use whatever version of wisdom our culture considers "common sense" at the moment, Satan will darken our minds as he did Eve's. If we hide God's Word in our hearts (Ps. 119:11) and use it against Satan, we will get the victory.

God has given us his Word, and he will hold us accountable for it. In the story of the rich man and Lazarus, the rich man asked for a supernatural visitor to warn his family. Abraham replied, "They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them" (Luke 16:29). The rich man believed that his family needed something greater than Scripture to convince them. They would believe the miraculous, he asserted (v. 30). Abraham denied this: "If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead" (v. 31). According to Jesus, nothing has more power than Scripture. We make a horrendous error if we heed the rich man's suggestion—if we seek to use means other than Scripture to convince people who will not be convinced by Scripture. According to Jesus, this plan has no hope. Only Scripture can change rebellious hearts. What is more, only Scripture will "destroy strongholds" (2 Cor. 10:4). Though humans may disregard Scripture as foolish, Satan does not. Where Satan holds people in bondage, Scripture can break his hold when no worldly means can.

STRENGTH IN WEAKNESS

This chapter has emphasized one point: God will bring incredible victories through his servants if they will use biblical means. Similarly, we have no expectation of biblical fruit from worldly means. "Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap" (Gal. 6:7). Our fleshly efforts have no more hope of success than Judean soldiers could have expected against Assy-

ian armies. I believe that Nahum prophesied about Jesus when he announced the coming “scatterer,” but he also foretold the advance of the church. Jesus gave his authority to his followers. Though it does not seem possible, Jesus even promised that “whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do” ([John 14:12](#)).

I encourage you to think back over the five weapons listed above: humility, prayer, fasting, the Holy Spirit, and Scripture. If you found deficiencies in your spiritual knowledge or practice, I would ask you to ask God to supply what is lacking. If you have not yet had the courage to pray for humility, please ask God to give you the courage. If you do not pray out of desperation, please confess your arrogance to God and ask him to show you how needy you really are. If you have never fasted, consider whether you would be willing to try. Fasting is difficult. It may not feel like a breakthrough. It will bring ugly, sinful things to the surface. As it does, ask God to cleanse and heal you. If you do not know much about the Holy Spirit, the Bible gives a tremendous promise to you.

What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him! ([Luke 11:11–13](#))

If you have tended to “lean on your own understanding” ([Prov. 3:5](#)), please understand that only Scripture will be effective in spiritual battles. Ask God to give you a mind disciplined enough to “take every thought captive to obey Christ” ([2 Cor. 10:5](#)).

We need Christ. We need him at every turn. He has given us an impossible task, but he has equipped us with sufficient tools. “The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong” ([Eccl. 9:11](#)). Victory belongs to those who will trust in the means that God has provided. “Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God” ([Ps. 20:7](#)).

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

1. Find a passage in the Bible where God’s people had success against spiritual “strongholds” ([2 Cor. 10:4](#)) and meditate on it. What methods did they use?
2. Have you ever been in a situation where you sensed supernatural evil? If so, how did you handle it? Have you ever meditated on the biblical teachings regarding demonic forces? How has this chapter affected your views about your “adversary the devil”?
3. Have you ever fasted? If so, what type of fast did you choose? How long did you fast? Pray and ask God if he would have you fast now. Ask him what you should fast for and what type of fast you

should choose. In *A Hunger for God*, John Piper offers an excellent introduction to fasting. If you would prefer a shorter treatment, the chapter on fasting in *Celebration of Discipline*, by Richard Foster, is also helpful.

4. Read [John 14–16](#) and pay attention to the teaching about the Holy Spirit. How much do you know about the Holy Spirit? How does that knowledge affect your daily life?