

## FIGHTING GODLESS SPECULATION II Corinthians 10:1-6

Intro: “Follow the science.”

- How many times have we been told that over the past year?
- Just follow the science about masks---about the six-foot distance---about the danger in going to a restaurant---to school---or to church.
- Those who insist we follow the science would have us believe that the science on such things is settled---and that there is no room for debate.
- Some even want to silence credentialed scientists who disagree with the “consensus.”
- The thing about scientific conclusions---however---is that they should always be kept open to further research and new discoveries.
- By its very nature---science is seldom ever settled.
- And while we may have very strong opinions about it---to mask or not to mask---is not a battle believers are called upon to fight.
- But---as we’re about to learn in II Corinthians 10---there are some battles we do need to be fighting.
- And one of them does lie in the realm of what many consider to be settled science---even though the Apostle Paul would probably classify it as speculation raised up against the knowledge of God.

- Yes---we’re once again going to look at evolution---before looking at our text.
- And even though evolution is not the hot topic it was some years ago---the battle over evolution isn’t over.
- Less than two years ago the Pew Research Center published a paper entitled “Darwin in America” that began with these words:
- “Almost 160 years after Charles Darwin publicized his groundbreaking theory on the development of life, Americans are still arguing about evolution. In spite of the fact that evolutionary theory is accepted by all but a small number of scientists, it continues to be rejected by many Americans. In fact, about one-in-five U.S. adults reject the basic idea that life on Earth has evolved at all. And roughly half of the U.S. population accepts evolutionary theory, but only as an instrument of God’s will.
- Most biologists and other scientists contend that evolutionary theory convincingly explains the origins and development of life on Earth. Moreover, they say, a scientific theory is not a hunch or a guess, but is instead an established explanation for a natural phenomenon, like gravity, that has repeatedly been tested and refined through observation and experimentation.
- So if evolution is as established in the scientific community as the theory of gravity, why are people still arguing about it more than a century and a half after Darwin proposed it? The answer lies, in large part, in the theological implications of evolutionary thinking. For many religious people, the Darwinian view of life – a panorama of brutal struggle and constant change – conflicts with both the biblical creation story and the Judeo-Christian concept of an active, loving God who intervenes in human events.”

- And it is the theological implications of evolution that force us to take another look at what some consider to be settled science.
- In Genesis we read:
  - “Then God said, ‘Let the earth bring forth living creatures after their kind: cattle and creeping things and beasts of the earth after their kind’; and it was so.
  - And God made the beasts of the earth after their kind, and the cattle after their kind, and everything that creeps on the ground after its kind; and God saw that it was good.
  - Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’
  - And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.”  
(Genesis 1:24-27)
- Without trying to define the distinction between kinds---it’s obvious that several distinct creative acts were involved in the creation of the various forms of life that exist on earth.
- And most importantly---the creation of man in the image of God set him apart from the rest of creation.
- So the question of our origin and purpose for being here is fundamental---and how we answer it determines who we are.
- And before we assume that Darwin’s proposals are the final answer---the ever-changing views of science on the matter of origins begs to be noted.
- The January 2020 homepage of *Business Insider* opened with these words---“A handful of recent discoveries have shattered anthropologists’ picture of where humans came from, and when.”
- It goes on to note---“As anthropologists have discovered new species of human ancestors, our understanding of human history has changed.”
- And---“As researchers make more of these breakthroughs, the puzzle of who we are and where we came from gets more complicated.”
- A December blog from the Public Library of Science began---“2020 has been...quite a year! The pandemic changed a lot about the world including the ways which paleoanthropologists and other fieldwork-based researchers operate.”
- The blog then went on to highlight different lines of evidence that are used in human origins research---including newly discovered fossils and DNA.
- Obviously these recent discoveries are viewed within the framework of evolutionary assumptions---but they at least give evidence to the fact that scientific views change.
- And since that’s the case---it’s not wrong for us to even challenge their underlying Darwinian assumptions.
- And while I do refer to them as Darwinian assumptions---the philosophical questions about our origin did not originate with Darwin.
- He just came up with a plausible explanation that didn’t rely on a supreme being---and that presents us with a problem.

- If God is no longer necessary---does He really exist?
- Did we just invent Him to explain what we couldn't explain---until science gave us the answers?
- I trust you see the problem here.
- A conflict does exist---and calling it a war might not be overstating the case.
- In fact---while Paul obviously wasn't thinking about the conflict between Darwinian naturalism and the various views of creationism---he did speak of spiritual and intellectual warfare in our text for today.
- In II Corinthians 10:3-5 we read:
  - “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh,
  - for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.
  - We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ,”
- That Darwin's conclusions about the origin of life qualify as speculations raised up against the knowledge of God was powerfully presented way back in 1925 by William Jennings Bryan.
- He was the famous orator---and three time Democratic nominee for President---who prosecuted John Thomas Scopes ---the high school biology teacher recruited by the ACLU to challenge a law forbidding the teaching of evolution in Tennessee.
- Bryan saw the teaching of evolution as a war between science and religion---and said so in what's become known as the Scopes Monkey Trial.
- “Evolution is at war with religion because religion is supernatural, it is therefore the relentless foe of Christianity which is a revealed religion.
- Let us, then, hear the conclusion of the whole matter. Science is a magnificent material for force, but is not a teacher of morals. It can also build gigantic intellectual ships, but it constructs no moral rudders for control of storm-tossed human vessels. It not only fails to supply the spiritual element needed, but some of its unproven hypotheses rob the ship of its compass and thus endanger its cargo.”
- In his closing statement he said---“The real attack of evolution, it will be seen is not upon orthodox Christianity or even upon Christianity, but upon religion—the most basic fact in man's existence and the most practical thing in life. If taken seriously and made the basis of a philosophy of life, it would eliminate love and carry man back to a struggle of tooth and claw.”
- Now---surprisingly---I found these quotes in a book entitled *Why Darwin Matters: The Case Against Intelligent Design*.
- The author---Michael Shermer---became a creationist shortly after he says he became a born-again Christian in high school in 1971.
- He graduated from Pepperdine---a Church of Christ university ---and even considered theology as a profession---but decided to pursue experimental psychology in graduate school.
- During that time he says the scales fell from his eyes---and he discovered that evolution happened.

- He went on to earn a Ph.D. in the history of science---and became the founding publisher of *Skeptic* magazine and the executive director of the Skeptics Society.
- In his book Dr. Shermer strives to demonstrate that Intelligent Design---which I find to be a very good way look at the evidence of creation---is not scientific.
- He also tries to convince Christians that evolution doesn't necessarily spell the end of morals and ethics---or even religion.
- In fact---he says evolution explains family values and social harmony---suggesting that as a social primate species we evolved the capacity for positive moral values because they enhance the survival of both family and community.
- He insists that evolution created these values in us---and that religion simply identified them as important in order to accentuate them.
- He even states that evolution explains evil---original sin---and the Christian model of human nature---suggesting that we may have evolved to be moral angels---but we are also immoral beasts.
- Dr. Shermer does leave room for the supernatural---if you leave it in the religious realm---and don't try to bring science and religion together.
- He writes---“Believers can have both religion and science as long as there is no attempt to make *A non-A*, to make reality unreal, to turn naturalism into supernaturalism.”
- He continues---“The most logically coherent argument for theists is that *God is outside time and space*; that is, God is beyond nature—super nature, or supernatural—and therefore cannot be explained by natural causes. God is beyond the dominion of science, and science is outside the realm of God.”
- Now---some of what he says here is true.
- God is beyond nature---and He cannot be explained by natural causes.
- But by dismissing God as unreal---and removing Him from time and space---we have a God who is unnecessary and completely detached from our world.
- That rules out a God who created the physical realms---who revealed Himself to mankind---and who entered into our world by becoming a man.
- In other words---that rules out the God of the Bible.
- All we're left with is a second-rate mythological god---and a feeble attempt to reinforce morals by teaching a lie.
- Obviously such a god quickly becomes obsolete.
- But does scientific investigation force us to accept Shermer's god?
- Absolutely not!
- In Romans 1:20-22 we read:
- “For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so they are without excuse.

- For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as god, or give thanks; but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.
- Professing to be wise, they became fools,”
- Paul makes it very clear that God’s fingerprint is all over creation---and if we’ll just look we can see it.
- That sounds like scientific observation to me.
- Now---the Bible is not a scientific textbook---and to read it as such will lead to unnecessary conflicts with scientific observations.
- The Bible tells us who created the world and His reasons for doing so---but it doesn’t explain how He did everything.
- So we may have to reevaluate some of our initial conclusions if scientific observations don’t bear them out.
- For centuries it was believed that the Bible taught that the sun revolved around the earth---because Joshua said the sun stood still.
- Copernicus proved that wrong---and eventually the church came to realize Joshua was merely describing a celestial phenomenon as seen from his perspective---not stating a scientific fact.
- The same was true about the belief that the world was flat.
- In Revelation 7:1 John says he saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth---but as Columbus proved---that didn’t mean the world was flat.
- So we must be careful not to insist that our understanding of a particular passage of Scripture is the only possible interpretation---especially when it conflicts with science.
- However---by its very nature science cannot evaluate the truly miraculous---so we cannot allow science to declare the supernatural activity recorded in Scripture to be impossible.
- And even if science does force us to rethink our conclusions on some matters of Biblical interpretation---that does not mean the Bible is wrong.
- That’s a mistake some make when they fight for one particular view of creation.
- They tend to equate their understanding of the Bible with the Bible itself---and defend it as such---even when overwhelming scientific evidence is against it.
- I’m convinced that truth revealed in God’s word will never conflict with truth revealed in God’s world.
- And there are many scientists today who are doing good science---without abandoning their belief in a supernatural creator.
- In fact---Michael Behe---the author of *Darwin’s Black Box: The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution* and *The Edge of Evolution: The Search for the Limits of Darwinism*---has powerfully illustrated how recent discoveries on the molecular level give strong evidence for intelligent design in our world---and thus a creator.
- Now those who have philosophically ruled out the possibility of a supernatural creator have accused Dr. Behe of using God to explain what he can’t explain---and suggest we just need to give science more time to come up with the answers.
- But their assumption that science will find the answers without the need for a creator is no more scientific than finding evidence for a creator in what can be seen.

- And contrary to what naturalistic evolutionists might insist---belief in a creator---or Intelligent Design---does not stop scientific research.
- In fact---as Dr. Behe makes very clear by examining the research into the way the malarial parasite has changed in response to drugs over the years---acknowledging the limits of evolution can lead to better research.
- Now---I do have to admit that by limiting himself to only looking at physical characteristics---Dr. Behe did come to accept the evolutionary concept of common descent.
- I disagree with his conclusion---and believe commonality in physical structure and a similar DNA blueprint does not rule out the separate creation of man in the image of God.
- But even if one concept of the evolutionary theory is held to be true---Behe does make it clear that two other fundamental aspects of Darwin's theory---random mutation and natural selection---cannot account for the changes that have taken place over the years.
- He finds the hand of an intelligent designer at work over and over again throughout time---and that leaves room for a God who is intimately involved in our world---and in our life.
- So while I do question some of Behe's conclusions---and acknowledge that he does not identify the creator---Intelligent Design does not fall into the category of godless speculation that needs to be confronted.
- In fact---I find the basic concept---and ongoing Intelligent Design research being done by a host of scientists---to be one of the best refutations of Darwinian evolution.

- That concludes the introduction to my sermon.
- So now let's go back to the text---and see how Paul fought against godless speculation---and give thought as to how we should do so as well.
- Paul begins by making clear the resolve we need to enter into the fight.

## I. THE RESOLVE II Corinthians 10:1-2

- “Now I, Paul, myself urge you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ—I who am meek when face to face with you, but bold toward you when absent!
- I ask that when I am present I may not be bold with the confidence with which I propose to be courageous against some, who regard us as if we walked according to the flesh.”
- We can only surmise about the situation in Corinth because we've only got one side of the correspondence---kind of like hearing only one end of a telephone conversation.
- But apparently there were some in Corinth who were not only teaching things contrary to what Paul taught---but were telling everyone not to worry about Paul.
- He wrote bold letters---they said---but was really a Casper Milquetoast in person---just a paper tiger---and there was no need to worry about his coming to Corinth.
- And Paul admitted that he didn't want to have to be bold when he got there.

- He hoped he wouldn't have to confront them the same way he confronted those who denied the fact that what he said was from God.
- Those who felt what he taught was nothing more than his opinion---and that he only taught with the authority of man.
- Paul was making it clear that he didn't back down from confrontations with the world.
- That he didn't turn tail and run when confronted by the pagan intelligentsia of his day---or feel incompetent to take them on face to face.
- Now---he did realize it was useless to argue for argument's sake---and advised Timothy to refuse foolish and ignorant speculations---knowing they produced nothing but quarrels.
- But he recognized the need for boldness---for resolve--- when the truth was being challenged.
- And he approached the fight the right way.

## II. THE APPROACH II Corinthians 10:3

- For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh,”
- Even though we walk in the flesh---the fundamental fight we are engaged in is spiritual in nature.
- It wasn't simply Paul against the Judaizers and Greek philosophers.
- It wasn't one man's thoughts and ideas against another's.

- And the battle we face is not one group against another.
- It's not creationists against evolutionists.
- For as Paul pointed out in Ephesians 6:12:
- “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.”
- We will have to confront men---but that's only because some are being used by the father of lies---the prince of the power of the air---the god of this world---Satan himself.
- But it is vital that we recognize that this is not just a conflict of human ideologies.
- This is spiritual warfare---and our only hope of victory is in the utilization of spiritual weapons.

## III. THE WEAPONS II Corinthians 10:4

- “for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.”
- If the only weapons we had in this fight were relative IQ's and educational degrees---most of us would be doomed.
- But this isn't simply an intellectual war---it's a spiritual war.
- And our weapons are spiritual in nature.

- If we'll equip ourselves with the armor of God---girding ourselves with truth---and righteousness---and the gospel of peace.
- And use our shield of faith---helmet of salvation---and the sword of the Spirit---we'll be able to destroy any fortress Satan might raise up to further his lies. (Ephesians 6:10-17)
- We have the truth of God---and as long as we don't equate the truth of God with our understanding of a particular passage---the truth of God will stand.
- And we need not be afraid to admit that our beliefs are protected by a shield of faith.
- Our conclusions about creation are not solely the result of examining the fingerprints of God we see in nature.
- In Hebrew 11:3 we read:
- "By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible."
- Our faith is built on numerous lines of evidence---not just the conclusions of design theorists.
- And even if all of Behe's conclusions are proven wrong---our faith in the Creator will stand.
- We've come to the conclusions we hold not only on the basis of the physical evidence---but also on the basis of historical---intuitive---philosophical---and biblical evidence.
- We know there is a Creator because He's revealed Himself in many different ways---and we'll not allow anyone to reduce Him to a second-rate myth.

- And not only have we been given the weapons needed to fight godless speculation---and we've been given the strategy.

#### IV. THE STRATEGY II Corinthians 10:5

- "We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ,"
- Paul was engaged in the destruction of speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God.
- He wasn't afraid to confront those who promoted godless ideologies---and I don't believe he waited until they found him.
- He was on the lookout for them---even within the churches.
- He attacked them wherever he found them---exposing them for what they were---and destroyed them with the truth of God.
- We too need to take the offensive against godless ideologies---and be on the lookout for them.
- We need to know what our children are being taught---and we need to understand the underlying philosophy of what we see and hear in our culture.
- We can't just ignore the lies being told---and hope they will disappear.
- Christ expects us to be light and salt---we are to expose lies and preserve truth.
- And to do that we must at times take the offensive.



- But we also need to be on the defensive.
- Paul says we need to take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.
- That means we need to run everything through the sieve of revelation to see if it's true or not.
- We've got to examine what we're taught---and what we're told ---and see if it holds true to the plumbline of God's word.
- Nothing should be assumed to be true until it has been compared with revealed truth---and found to be in harmony with it.
- Now---as we've already noted---we must be careful not to assume the word of God says something it doesn't actually say.
- And there is therefore no need to ignore discoveries and theories that make us reexamine our beliefs.
- It doesn't even hurt our kids to be taught evolutionary theory.
- But we should try to keep it from being taught in a way that makes God irrelevant.
- And we must make certain that our kids are adequately equipped to defend their faith.
- We can never accept as truth anything that contradicts the revealed word of God.
- And we should remember that God's word has not been proven wrong in over 3,000 years of trying---while science textbooks are outdated before they get into classrooms.

- Finally---we must never assume that those who are better educated than us will fight the battle for us.
- For as Peter made clear in I Peter 3:15---we must all be ready to make a defense to everyone who asks us to give an account for the hope that is in us.
- That means we must all be warriors in the fight against godless speculation.

## V. THE WARRIORS II Corinthians 10:6

- “and we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete.”
- Paul recognized that as an apostle he was in a position to punish disobedience---and he fully intended to do so when he came to Corinth.
- But only after the believers had done what they were called to do.
- They had a responsibility to teach---to confront---and even wage spiritual war if need be---before the apostle arrived.
- He didn't want them leaving it all up to him.
- The same is true today.
- Every believer must be involved in spiritual warfare.

- Now---it is true that God will raise up special warriors to fight specific battles---like Michael Behe---Hugh Ross---and a host of Bible-believing scientists.
- But every believer must be a warrior in the fight against godless speculation.
- It's imperative that we all do what we can to expose godless philosophies---no matter what form they take---and wherever they present themselves.
- The minds and souls of men---and our children---are at stake.
- This is our Father's world---and we can allow no one to convince us otherwise.