

Taking Every Thought Captive
Emmanuel Church Family Camp
August 2020

(2 Corinthians 10:3–5)³ *For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh.* ⁴ *For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds.* ⁵ *We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ,*

Observations:

- Paul envisions the Christian life as a pitched battle (see also Ephesians 6)
- But quickly reminds us that the weapons of our warfare are unlike the weapons used by our adversaries.
 - o Lies
 - o Misdirections
 - o Character assassinations
 - o Chaos and violence
- However, they are powerful nonetheless, ***“they have divine power to destroy strongholds.”***
- Our spiritual weapons:
 - o Destroy arguments (def. – “a reasoning such as is hostile to the Christian faith”)
 - o And every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God
 - o And take captive every thought to obey Christ
- The battle in our nation today:
 - o Between two visions of America
 - 1619 Project: America was corrupt from its inception and must be totally dismantled, reconceived and reformed anew.
 - 1776 Vision: America was founded upon righteous principles and has over time struggled to become more consistent with her founding documents ***(which were mostly guided/informed by the Bible!)***
- (John Adams) “Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.”
- (George Washington) “Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to ***political prosperity***, religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism, who should labor to subvert these great pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the duties of men and citizens...And let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reasoning and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in the exclusion of religious principle.”
 - Those of the former persuasion understand the inseparable connection between Christianity and America’s founding principles and therefore

understand the necessity of undermining the Church in order to undo the nation.

- So, we see a two-front war in our day: the world against the church and the world against Christian principles and founding of our nation.
- And the world is doing quite well it would seem:

- * More than one in three people (37%) could not name a single right protected by the First Amendment. THE FIRST AMENDMENT!
- * Only one in four (26%) can name all three branches of the government. (In 2011, 38% could name all three branches.)
- * One in three (33%) can't name any branch of government. (None. Not even one!)
- * Twenty-six percent believed that the Constitution's purpose was to declare independence from England
- * Forty-six percent of adult Americans did not know that the purpose of the Constitution was to create a federal government and define its powers.

So, in order to “take every thought captive” we need to consider what has been taught, K-12 and at university for the last few decades. And then consider how to bring our “spiritual weapons” to bear against them in order to “take every system of thought captive, making them obedient to the Lord Jesus Christ.”

“Beware of all “isms” except for prisms.” (With thanks to David Barton)

Historical negativism

Historical negativism is a steady flow of belittling and demeaning portrayals of western heroes, beliefs, values, and institutions.

An accurate presentation of history depends on telling the good, the bad, and the ugly about any event, person, or period, but negativist stress the bad and the ugly while routinely ignoring the good. They can identify every blemish that is appeared on the face of the country over the past four centuries but not what has made America the envy of almost every people in the world – every people, that is, except many modern Americans, who can now recite more of what's wrong with America than what's right.

For example, most public-school textbooks teach students about the infamous American witch trials in which 27 individuals died. This is certainly appropriate, but these trials should be put in context. What is conveniently omitted is that witch trials were also occurring across the world at that time with 500,000 put to death in Europe, including 30,000 in England, 75,000 in France, and 100,000 in Germany. Why do modern texts point out the 27 deaths in America but ignore the 500,000 elsewhere? ***Historical negativism.***

- So, in our day...
 - Columbus
 - Jefferson
 - Washington
 - Confederate generals

- All “cancelled” for violations of modern sensibilities *in order to justify the dismantling* of traditional American norms in government, society and *religion*.
- Historical negativism would have us look at those listed in the Hall of Faith found in Hebrews 11 thusly:
 - Abraham, who faithlessly slept with Sarah’s handmaid in order to obtain the child that God had promised, and later sent Hagar and her son, Ishmael, into the wilderness to die.
 - Isaac, who faithlessly tried to subvert the order of blessing prescribed by God before his sons were born.
 - Jacob, whose favoritism of Joseph provoked his other sons to great jealousy and fraternal treachery.
 - Moses, who, contrary to God’s command and insulting His holiness, struck the rock in anger, instead of speaking to it.
 - Rahab the *harlot* (‘nuff said.)
 - Gideon, who, late in his life, promoted the idolatry of the golden ephod that he made with his own hands.
 - Samson’s sexual immorality.
 - David’s multiple wives, adultery and murder.
 - Samuel’s mismanagement of his family.
 - And Peter, in his second epistle, refers to Lot (you know, the one who offered his daughters to the men of his town who were intent on raping the angels who had come to Lot’s house, and later fathered Moab and Ammon through those same daughters) as “*righteous Lot*.”
- This is *not* to say that character and genuine faith do not matter, for they surely do. But neither are we to entirely dismiss the achievements, or the ways that God used individuals to accomplish His purposes. Rather, we should:
 - Acknowledge their achievements, thanking God for the great blessings that their faithful obedience produced and secured.
 - While naming and condemning every faithless act and character flaw as sinful disparagements of God’s person and wicked transgressions of His laws.
 - Remembering and praising God for His delight to pardon the sins of everyone who believes His Gospel.
- **Our weapons:**
 - Thankfulness and gratitude for the ways God has blessed our nation.
 - Confession of sin (homo-logeō) agreeing with/speaking with God about sin.
 - Proclamations of God’s delight to forgive sins for Jesus’ sake.

Historical relativism

The second historical malpractice is relativism, which asserts that in history, religion, culture, and law there are neither absolutes nor transcendent principles. Values are to be determined individually, and personal standards trump traditional ones; thus, subjectivity and feelings prevail over objectivity and facts.

In the legal arena, this malpractice had led relativist judges to redefine laws and constitutions to reflect their own personal beliefs and values. US Supreme Court Chief Justice Charles Evans Hughes accurately encapsulated the essence of this belief when he said: "We are under a constitution – but the constitution is what the judges say it is."

- **Jesus is the truth**
- (John 14:6) *Jesus said to him, "I am the way, **and the truth**, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*
 - o Truth is a person.
 - But an **unchanging** person.
- (Hebrews 13:8) *Jesus Christ is **the same yesterday and today and forever.***
 - o So, truth is personal and unchanging
 - Intensely relevant
 - o Immutable and absolute

Our Weapons:

- Declaring that truth is anything/everything that conforms to God's revelation (especially Jesus who is the fulness of God's revelation)
- Declaring that goodness is anything/everything that conforms to God's holiness (as revealed in Jesus Christ, "the radiance of God's glory and the express image of His person.")
- Declaring (as Paul did in Col. 2:3) that **all** the treasures of knowledge and wisdom are hidden **in Christ**.

Anti-nationalism

The third device for pulling down what is traditionally honored is anti-nationalism, which undermines patriotism, or the love of one's country. While this can occur through a direct denunciation or demeaning of America (as with historical negativism), it usually occurs through the more subtle means of emphasizing a loyalty to things either larger or smaller than the nation.

Promoting a global focus is one form of anti-nationalism. Another results from urging a loyalty to something smaller than the nation, such as one subgroup – what is today known as "identity politics." Hence, many individuals no longer identify themselves as Americans first but rather as feminists, union members, Latinos, LGBT, African Americans, evangelicals, seniors, and so on.

- Nations in the Eternal State
 - o (Revelation 7:9) *After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from **every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages**, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands,*
- Our Weapons:
 - o Declaring that ethnicity and nationality transcend the grave and will serve to glorify God in their redeemed states.
 - o The best way to learn to love all nations/cultures, is to first love your own.

- E.g. The best way to teach your boys to love/respect all women, is to teach them to love/respect their own moms and sisters.

Rejection of American Exceptionalism

Before examining the final three modern historical malpractices, it should be noticed that the greatest casualty of the combined influence of historical negativism, historical relativism, and anti-nationalism is American exceptionalism – the belief that America is blessed and enjoys unprecedented stability, prosperity, and liberty as a result of the institutions and policies produced by unique ideas such as God given inalienable rights, individualism, limited government, republicanism, and an educated and virtuous citizenry

Americans are truly blessed statistically speaking America is an exceptional nation for in so many important categories among the other nations of the world she represents the exception rather than the rule this exceptionalism and compass is a great diversity of race, ethnicity, and religion, and his benefited every American.

But the true source of American exceptionalism, is the view of human nature shared by our founding fathers: They recognized that the sinfulness of the governed needs to be restrained by just laws. And the sinfulness of those who govern needs to be restrained by a separation of powers and a robust system checks and balances.

Our Weapons:

- Declare the sinfulness of mankind (governed and governing) and insist that the “fourth branch of government: ***self-control***” is necessary for good government and ***only possible*** by dying to sin/self through faith in Jesus Christ.

4 Modernism (Presentism)

A fourth common historical malpractice is modernism, which examines historical events and persons as if they occurred and lived today rather than in the past. It thus severs history from its context and setting, therefore misrepresenting historical beliefs and events.

- CS Lewis called this “chronological snobbery” (we’re newer therefore better)
- So, we look at the sins of past ages (e.g. slavery, Nazi-ism), assuring ourselves that we would not have made the same horrible mistakes, sanctimoniously condemning those who were (just like we are today) products of their time and blind to certain sins.
 - E.g. today, no thinking person denies that human life begins at conception, but many continue to assert the right of the mother to end that human life in the womb. Future generations will look back on our time, the same way we look at pre-Civil war times, unable to understand how we could be so blind to something so obviously wrong/sinful.

Our weapons:

- Declare the whole counsel of God (as Paul did in Ephesus)
- Calling sin “sin”, and remembering that, according to Jesus, we will be judged by the same standard that we use to judge others.

5 Minimalism (Reductionism)

The 5th modern malpractice is minimalism, which is an unreasonable insistence on oversimplification dash on reducing everything to model lithic causes and linear effects. - - -

- Minimalism is easy easily recognizable and political campaign rhetoric: candidates take behemoth problems facing the nation's dash complicated difficulties that often have been decades in the making and reduced them to one-line platitudes and campaign slogans.
- Minimalism is also very evident in the modern portrayal of history. For example, if you ask most citizens today why America separated from Great Britain, the overwhelming response will be quote taxation without representation." This is certainly what we have been taught in school; And that answer is acceptable – as far as it goes;
 - o but taxation without representation was only one of 27 grievances set forth in the Declaration of Independence.
 - o Listed in the declaration 11 times more often than taxation without representation was the abuse of representative powers;
 - o The abuse of military powers 7 times more often;
 - o The abuse of judicial powers four times as often; and stirring up domestic insurrection twice as often.
 - o Taxation without representation was mirror merely grievance #17 out of the 27, listed alongside Great Britain suppression of immigration and her interference with our foreign trade.

Our Weapons:

- Declare the “strong meat” of Christianity
(Hebrews 5:12–14)¹² *For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, ¹³ for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. ¹⁴ But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.*
 - It took Paul 2 ½ years preaching every day in Ephesus to declare the “whole counsel of God.”
 - I.e. not everything is a simple as we would like it to be.
 - o Just love Jesus – twinkle, twinkle little star
 - History, good government and Christianity alike, are complicated, and require diligent study to understand and make good use of.

6 Rigid Secularism

The 6th and final error that undermines historical accuracy is an unrelenting secularism, which represents an inaccurate and distorted view of religious influences in American history. This malpractice manifests itself in several shrewd and clever ways including the use of omission as well as the selective presentation of specific historical errors, events, and persons.

- Separation of Church and State
 - o Today: All vestiges of religion must be divorced and removed from secular life.

- At the founding of our country: The federal government must be prevented from making and enforcing a national religion (like the Church of England in Great Britain.)

(From George Washington's Farewell Address, 1796) ***And let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle.***"

Our Weapons:

- Teach our children:
 - (Deu. 6) God's Word applies to everything inside our homes and outside our gates. Everything (including civil government)
 - (Eph. 6) Bring them up in the ***instruction*** and admonition of the Lord.
 - Paideia = the entire enculturation of the child, fitting him/her to be a faithful, informed, productive citizen in all areas of life.
 - ***Dads: We cannot lose another generation!***
- Declaring Jesus as sovereign Lord over all (heaven and earth)
 - Ending our Gospel presentations where Paul did in Philippians 2.

Application:

- We need to call our country to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.
 - In part by leaning against these ***"isms"*** that are perverting and destroying our society today.
- But before we do, we (the church) need to believe what God has clearly revealed in His Word:
 - The sinfulness of mankind.
 - And the utter impossibility of that problem being rectified by government.
 - The suitability and sufficiency of Jesus Christ as savior and governor.
 - The authority, perspicuity and sufficiency the Bible.
 - The blessings that accrue (and have accrued) to those who order their families and nations according to God's Word (and to thank God for this!)
- And ***declare*** the same (lots of "declare" above)
 - But people don't believe the Bible!
 - ***That's why*** it needs to be declared to them.
 - If a kidnapper has your child, and you point a gun at him...
- And lastly, in the face of rising chaos and violence, we must be prepared to wield the powerful weapon of, wait for it, ***mercy*** (yes, I said, mercy)

Illustration of the potency of mercy

- November of 2008
- Gainesville State Highschool, Texas

- Win-Loss record: 0 and 8 (had only scored 2 touchdowns all season long)
- And they had never played a home game
 - o Because there is no football field at the Gainesville State High School in the Maximum Security Juvenile Corrections Facility. It was a high school within a state prison.
- 14 players were escorted by 12 uniformed officers from the bus to the field.
- They wore helmets and pads that were at least 7 years old.
- Most of the boys had been abandoned by their families, presuming they had families to begin with. So, they never had any fans.
- So, imagine their surprise as they ran out on to the field at “Grapevine Faith High School” through a gauntlet of cheering fans and cheerleaders 40 yards long with a “Go Tornadoes” banner at the other end through which they crashed onto the field.
- They then looked into the stands and were astonished to see fans; 200 hundred of them; filling the seats behind their bench along with half of Grapevine’s cheerleading squad already beginning to lead the fans in support of the Gainesville team.
- And then, if that was not already enough, the football players began to hear their own names; *their own names*, being called out by the cheering crowd, rooting them on, urging them to do their very best.
- “I never in my life thought I’d hear people cheering for us to hit their kids,” Gainesville’s QB and middle linebacker, Isaiah told ESPN. “I wouldn’t expect another parent to tell somebody to hit their kids. But they wanted us to!”

Even though the Tornadoes ultimately lost that game, 33-14, the Gainesville players were so pumped up that they gave head coach Mark Williams a sideline squirt-bottle shower like he’d just won the Superbowl.

So why all the effort for a rival school with a 0-9 record?

Faith’s head coach, Kris Hogan, decided that he wanted to do something kind for the Gainesville team during their football match, reported ESPN.

Faith had never played Gainesville before, but Hogan knew the odds of Gainesville winning were slim. Faith had a 7-2 winning record and Gainesville had only scored two touchdowns all year. According to ESPN, Faith has 70 kids, 11 coaches, the latest football equipment and involved parents. Gainesville, on the other hand, has teenagers with convictions for drugs, assault and robbery — all wearing dilapidated football gear.

So, Hogan sent a message to the Faith community. He asked that half of his fans cheer for the Tornadoes, half of the cheerleaders root for them, and everyone know the rival team members by name.

Not everyone was initially excited about the idea. According to ESPN, one Faith player walked into Hogan’s office and asked, “Coach, why are we doing this?”

Hogan replied, "Imagine if you didn't have a home life. Imagine if everybody had pretty much given up on you. Now imagine what it would mean for hundreds of people to suddenly believe in you."

"Here's the message I want you to send," Hogan said. "You are just as valuable as any other person on planet Earth."

That night, the Gainesville players played the best game of their lives, scoring two touchdowns.

After the game, both teams gathered in the middle of the field to pray and that's when Isaiah surprised everybody by asking to lead.

"We had no idea what the kid was going to say," remembers Coach Hogan.

According to ESPN, Isaiah said, "Lord, I don't know how this happened, so I don't know how to say thank You, but I never would've known there was so many people in the world that cared about us."

As the Tornadoes walked back to their bus, they were each handed a bag for the ride home — a burger, some fries, a soda, some candy, a Bible, and an encouraging letter from a Grapevine Faith player.

The Gainesville coach also found Hogan after the game and grabbed him by the shoulders and said, "You'll never know what your people did for these kids tonight. You'll never, ever know."

- Beloved, you are a recipient of divine mercy; a mercy and kindness indelibly tattooed on your skin in the water of baptism; and weekly exhibited to you in the bread and wine of the Lord's Table.
 - o Yes, you were a traitorous, despised foreigner, living under a divine curse.
 - o But God has brought you near to Himself through the shed blood of His Son, our savior.
 - o So, come and welcome to Jesus Christ, in whom righteousness and mercy have forever kissed.
 - o Which is why we love to sing: (How Sweet and Awful is the Place)

While all our hearts and all our songs, join to admire the feast, each of us cry with thankful tongues, "Lord, why was I a guest?"