

Bridal Revelation and Spiritual Warfare (2 Corinthians 10–11)

Please refer to the teaching notes for this message.

INTRODUCTION

Tonight, I want to talk about breaking spiritual strongholds as specifically related to the revelation of the Bride of Christ and the revelation of Jesus as the Bridegroom God. The passage we're looking at is 2 Corinthians 10-11. Most of you know, if you've studied spiritual warfare, that 2 Corinthians 10 is one of the primary chapters, so this is a passage that's very important. If this passage is new to you, I want to encourage you to work through the ideas from 2 Corinthians 10. However, the important point tonight is 2 Corinthians 11, which is the next chapter, because it's the application of what's taught in 2 Corinthians 10. There are a lot of people who study spiritual warfare and only study 2 Corinthians 10. They never actually apply 2 Corinthians 11 to the principles that are laid out in 2 Corinthians 10. The answer to 2 Corinthians 10 and the application of those principles are found in the following chapter.

Let's look at the main principles here in one of the primary passages in the Bible on spiritual warfare. 2 Corinthians 10:3-5. "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity"—a tenacious commitment—"to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:3-5).

Though we walk in the flesh, in our human bodies, we don't just war according to our fleshly abilities. It's as if Paul is saying here, "There's a supernatural dimension. Though we live in the natural, we really are living in the flesh." He's using the word flesh here to mean the natural. "We don't war with just natural ideas. We war with spiritual ideas and spiritual power."

"THE WEAPONS OF OUR WARFARE ARE NOT CARNAL"

Then, in 2 Corinthians 10:4 he talks about our weapons. The Bible says we have weapons, and we need to use those weapons. I'm going to teach you how to use those weapons tonight. The weapons of our warfare against Satan aren't carnal, which means they aren't natural. They aren't fleshly. They aren't just natural realities, but rather these weapons are mighty in God. They're mighty. When you first hear about them, you may not believe that they're mighty, but they are. Paul gave us understanding on how we can pull down spiritual strongholds in our life. This is one of the fundamental points that Paul is making. These weapons are mighty, but they must be used. Many people have knowledge of how to use these weapons, but they don't actually use them. So the mighty weapons don't do them any good.

We're going to find some of the application in 2 Corinthians 11, which is often never read alongside 2 Corinthians 10. We're going to put these two chapters together, and this will give us some practical application. These weapons are mighty when they're used.

CASTING DOWN THE ARGUMENTS THAT ARE LODGED AGAINST GOD IN OUR MINDS

Now here's how you use them: you pull down strongholds. There are demonic strongholds that must be pulled down. Again, I'm going to teach you how to pull down strongholds in a very simple fashion. Paul says it again, but in a different way: he talks about casting down arguments (1 Cor. 10:5). We'll find in a moment that pulling down strongholds and casting down arguments is really the same thing. Paul is saying the same thing in different ways, because these are arguments against God that are lodged in our minds. Satan comes to give us

lies or arguments against God. He whispers to us, “God doesn’t care. God hasn’t really forgiven me. God isn’t going to intervene in my life.” Those are arguments; those are lies. Those ideas get lodged in our minds, and as simple as they seem, they’re powerful in a negative way against us.

It is as if Paul said, “We’re going to pull down these strongholds.” He says it another way: “Casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor. 10:5). We’re going to cast down every high thing. This is demonic. It exalts itself against the true knowledge of who Jesus is. The way that the enemy brings a person’s life into bondage is by telling them lies about the knowledge of God. Therefore they have wrong ideas about God. They have wrong ideas about who they are in God. Again, this seems very simple, but it’s profound in its power in your life. The devil comes in and gives you wrong ideas about God, and he lies about the knowledge of God. That leads you to have wrong ideas about who you are in Christ.

It’s as if Paul said, “What we need to do is to bring all of our thoughts into captivity for the sake of obedience to Christ.” He uses the word *captivity* here as though he were saying, “Our thought life must be brought into this tenacious commitment and agreement with what the Word of God says.” We’re going to break this down, principle by principle, in chapter 10, and then give the application in chapter 11.

FORTRESSES OF BITTERNESS ARE BUILT WITH BRICKS OF ACCUSATION

Paragraph B. A stronghold in the ancient world was a very common thing. It was a fortress, or a fort. In the ancient world, when they talked about a stronghold, they talked about a fortress. There are many different types. It would be like a stone wall surrounding a city that protected it against the enemy. That’s what a fortress was. Paul is using this common idea of a fort, or a big wall around a city that protected it. That’s a positive idea. Cities had these walls, or forts, for positive reasons—to keep the enemy out.

Paul is using this idea, and he basically says, “Actually, Satan has erected a stone wall around you that’s trying to keep the blessing of God out of your life. You need to tear that wall down, so that the blessing of God can enter into your life. Then the bondage of being held captive inside that fortress will be over, and you’ll be liberated and set free.”

I think some of you are going to get set free tonight. Some of you already have been, but even more of you are going to be set free tonight. Just picture this—a wall fifty feet high and ten feet thick. That’s a castle. That’s a fortress. That’s a serious wall. When the enemy came to attack a city, they couldn’t get into the inside of the city because of that big, tall, thick wall of stone. That is, again, a positive thing. A city would build these walls for positive reasons to protect themselves from an invading army. Paul is using this positive truth.

The makeup of the stone wall is this: it’s like each of the stones in this wall are ideas that we believe that are wrong about God, about ourselves, and about the kingdom. If we believe these wrong ideas, it’s like these stones of accusation are built up around us that are against God. The stones are all accusations against God and lies about God. It becomes a fortress that keeps us in bondage to darkness and keeps the blessing of God out of our lives. We have to tear those stone walls down.

SATAN SEEKS TO ESTABLISH SPIRITUAL STRONGHOLDS IN OUR MIND

Paragraph D. Satan seeks to establish strongholds and to build a fortress around your mind and your life. He wants to keep the presence of God from liberating your heart. The reason Satan does this is because it requires

you to have agreement with the presence of God for the presence of God to liberate you. There are exceptions. Sometimes, the Lord just sovereignly breaks in and touches someone. The way the blessing of God works in your life, and the way the presence of the Holy Spirit works in your life, have a significant relationship to the agreement in your mind with the truth about God. If you don't know the truth, and you don't agree with the truth, the presence of God won't liberate you until you come into agreement with what He says about you. The devil wants to keep you in bondage by keeping you in lies. These lies are like a fort, like a big, thick wall. The fortress built around you is made up of all these stones that accuse God. All the lies are all assembled together to keep us bondage. This is the way he operates against the human race.

PERSONAL, CULTURAL, AND COSMIC STRONGHOLDS

Roman numeral II. There are different types of strongholds. There are three that I'm going to address tonight. There are personal strongholds. Those are the ones that we're going to spend our time on. I want you aware of the other types of strongholds. There are personal strongholds, there are cultural strongholds, and there are cosmic strongholds, which speak of the spiritual realm.

A COLLECTION OF IDEAS THAT ARE IN AGREEMENT WITH SATAN

Paragraph A. A stronghold begins in the mind. A stronghold starts in the mind; then it brings our emotions into bondage, and eventually, then our character comes into bondage. It just escalates. I want you to get how simple this is; but it's profound in its meaning to your life. A stronghold is a collection of ideas that are in agreement with Satan. That's what it is. The people who have these ideas don't believe that they're in agreement with Satan. They just think they're their ideas, or they think everyone thinks this way. Or, "This is how I was raised," or, "This is how I always thought." They tend to not pay attention to these ideas. They don't know how significant it is for them to renounce those ideas and to replace them with right ideas.

These lies are wrong ideas, and they accuse Jesus. They're lies like, "He doesn't love you." That's an accusation against Jesus' leadership. Here are some examples of lies: "God doesn't see you." "He doesn't care." "He isn't going to break in anyway." "He's forgotten me." "He doesn't have a good plan for my life." "His mercy isn't strong enough to forgive me." Those are lies that people believe, and many times they don't actually say them in clear sentences, because if they actually declared them, they would say, "That can't be true." But they still believe them. There are a number in this room who have strongholds in your mind because you believe subtle but powerful lies against Jesus and His leadership over your life.

Some of you believe lies; some of you believe lies specifically about your standing before Him. If you really knew how He saw you and how you stand before Him, your heart would be liberated. That's what Paul is going to talk about, and we'll look at that in a few moments.

Paragraph B. There are cultural strongholds and there are cosmic strongholds. I don't want to go into those tonight, but I just wanted to mention them so that you know that they exist. They operate the same way. These strongholds are based on lies that are in agreement with darkness and lies against God.

SPIRITUAL STRONGHOLDS ARE ESTABLISHED BY AGREEING WITH DARKNESS

Roman numeral III. Strongholds are established by agreeing with darkness. Strongholds—paragraph A—are established by opening doors to Satan in two specific ways that we're going to go over. There are two ways we open a door to Satan—through sinful actions and wrong belief systems. Even as believers: you could be a born-again believer and have wrong ideas about Jesus and walk in sinful patterns. These open the door for bondage in

your life. It's not mysterious how the bondage is broken. Paul in 2 Corinthians describes the simple way we break the bondage. These weapons are mighty. These weapons are effective. They may seem simple; they may seem foolish. You might think, "That can't really make that big a difference." I want to assure you on the basis of the Word of God that these weapons are mighty, as simple as they are. They will be effective. They will bring liberty to your heart, your emotions, your mind, and your body in time if you stay with them.

OPENING DOORS TO SATAN THROUGH SINFUL ACTIONS AND BELIEF SYSTEMS

Strongholds are established by opening doors to Satan through sinful actions and belief systems.

We're still in paragraph A. Satan's sphere of activity is the domain of darkness. He is the god of darkness. That's his domain. That's his sphere that he operates in—darkness. Here's the point: wherever there's darkness, Satan has legal access to operate because he is the god of darkness. That's his domain.

Wherever there's darkness, dark ideas, lies about Jesus, dark actions, or behavior that's in disobedience to Jesus, there's darkness. Wherever there's darkness, he has legal access to operate in your life. He has liberty to move, and God will let him move because he has the domain of darkness. That's the sphere God has apportioned to him. Here's the problem: if that darkness gets into our heart, Satan has liberty to move in greater ways because we've opened up our own life to that realm of darkness. That's his domain. We can't open up ourselves to the realm of darkness. Then we'll be confused about why we're in bondage. We say, "God, deliver me!"

God might answer, "Well, I will; but you must renounce the belief system and the collection of ideas that you have."

Some people say, "Yes, but my church background taught me that." It doesn't matter who taught you. There are so many ideas about Jesus being taught in the Church that aren't true. They're still effective in Satan's kingdom. It doesn't matter if the Church teaches them. If they're lies, they're still lies. It's essential that we study the Word and know the truth about Jesus. If we have wrong ideas or wrong behavior, again, we're in darkness; we give Satan legal access to our mind, to our emotions, and to our life. Jesus was referring to this in John 14:30, when he called Satan "the ruler of this world" who was coming. Jesus said, "He has nothing in Me" (Jn. 14:30). Jesus was basically saying, "I have no agreement with Satan, no darkness in Me—not in My belief systems or My behavior. Therefore, Satan has no legal access at all to touch Me. He has nothing in Me."

That's obviously the goal of how we want to live. We don't want behavior or belief systems that are rooted in darkness because it gives Satan access to us. His domain is the domain of darkness, and if that darkness is in your heart or in my heart, Satan has a dominion; he has legal right to be active. We can shut the door. We can break our agreement with that darkness and in the name of Jesus drive him out. As simple as that is, it's mighty and powerful.

WHEN WE SIN, WE ALLOW SATAN LEGAL ACCESS INTO OUR LIVES

Demons tremble when we break our agreement with them and call on the name of Jesus. Again, as simple as it is, many believers don't do that. They don't know the Bible enough to even know that they're in darkness, even though they're born again and will go to heaven when they die. They have a dimension of darkness lodged in their thinking. Beloved, you can be born again and have the Holy Spirit live in you, but your mind can remain un-renewed. Huge strongholds of darkness can still be in your mind and heart even though you're born again and on your way to heaven.

Paragraph B. Sometimes, we feel an irrationally heightened lust, fear, oppression, or anxiety. Sometimes, we will feel an irrational or heightened sense of anxiety. It's really exaggerated, and it only lasts for a short time—maybe a few minutes, a few hours, or a few days. We feel this heightened energy of darkness. Many times, it's an irrational fear. We have no reason to be afraid. We're thinking to ourselves, "Now, where did that come from?" Or maybe you're experiencing a feeling of depression, an anxiety, or a type of lust, and there are many types of lust—not just immorality, but also this irrational, exaggerated, heightened fear or desire in the realm of lust will come after us.

Beloved, that's a flaming missile. That's from Satan. That's a demon striking you. That can be resisted. When this kind of thing rises up in us, we might think, "Maybe I'm just oppressed now. Maybe I'm just in bondage to fear."

The demon is whispering, "That's right!" He's lying to you. You're not in bondage to that, but he wants you to believe it. If you believe it, that bondage will actually increase. That's a lie against God. You're not in bondage; you're under the reign of grace. You're under the leadership of Jesus. You're born again.

"Yes, but this feeling rose up inside of me..."

You mustn't agree with that feeling. You must renounce it, expose it, and in the name of Jesus rebuke it and the demon behind it. When we sin, we give Satan legal entry into our lives to work in a greater way in us.

DON'T ALLOW SATAN A GRIP ON YOUR MIND AND EMOTIONS

Paragraph C. This is important. When we act on sin, we actually give Satan legal doors of entry into our life. It's very important. I talked to some young people and they said something like, "Well, we just went out and had a weekend fling. Boys will be boys. I'll be going to Bible school next week, so this was my semester break, and my last fling before the internship. It's just one time, I feel kind of down and out, and so I messed up."

Here's the problem: when we go out and do things, it's not that God won't forgive us. It's that we actually open the door to Satan to increase his activity in our life. It's not neutral. There's no such thing as a neutral little fling that has no consequences. The Devil comes and says, "God is angry and finished with you."

God might say, "No, I love you. I love you as much as ever I did. It's not about Me being finished with you. It's the fact that Satan now has a greater grip on your mind and your emotions."

Satan wants our weakness to escalate to wickedness. With respect to the person who has a stirring for immorality, and who goes dabbling in pornography, he wants that weakness towards immorality to escalate to wickedness, to bondage, and it opens the door for a demon of perversion to get into their life. When you go in that direction, it's like you're giving the key to a demon, the key to your heart, and saying, "You can have me for the weekend." The demon will take you.

Demons are expensive to get, they're expensive to maintain, and they're expensive to get rid of. People are imagining an innocent summer fling. It costs a lot of money to get demons, it costs a lot of money to feed your pet demon, and then it costs a lot of money to get rid of it. They're really expensive, trust me. It's financially, emotionally, relationally, and spiritually very, very expensive to play with demons. Demons hide, so it just

seems like it's kind of an exaggerated, negative feeling. But the problem is compounded, because he lies to you after you walk through that door of darkness, and then he compounds the darkness by saying, "God is finished with you!" That's not the truth at all. Now the stronghold is even stronger because now the person is running from Jesus instead of to Jesus, and they've lost their confidence. They don't have a foundation in the Word, and they've opened the door to darkness.

Again, Satan wants weakness to escalate to wickedness, but he can't do it without us. We have to cooperate with him step by step.

IT'S MUCH HARDER TO RESIST A HABIT THAN A PROMPTING OF LUST

Here in James 1:13-15, we find that sin doesn't stop with one act; it grows. James talked about sin becoming full-grown. People sometimes play around a little with immorality. I'll just stay on the immorality. That's so prevalent in our culture. They play around with a little pornography; but beloved, sin grows. James talked about sin becoming full-grown. It doesn't go away on its own.

St. Augustine was one of the great leaders in the Church. He has this quote: "Lust yielded to becomes a habit. The habit not resisted becomes bondage." He used the word *necessity*. The person yields to lust, a little pornography, and a little drunkenness. It then becomes a habit after a short amount of time. It's way harder to resist a habit than a prompting of lust. If that isn't resisted, it becomes a necessity, and eventually it leads to full-grown bondage.

PULLING DOWN STRONGHOLDS OF THE MIND

Roman numeral IV. Pulling down strongholds of the mind. Let's look at this passage again. I want to review it right in front of you. "The weapons of our warfare are mighty" (2 Cor. 10:5, paraphrased). Notice the phrase: we pull down these big stone fortresses built around our minds by the devil. We have to pull them down. We cast them down. Notice what it is that we cast down: arguments; pieces of information. We might imagine it would be more complicated, but it's not. This will work for the most uneducated people in the world. They cast down the arguments that they used to accept.

Instead of the word *argument*, use the phrase "accusation against the truth of who God is and who you are in God," or in Christ. We're to pull strongholds down, or we're to cast them down. We pull down these walls built around us. Picture this fifty-foot wall of stone, and each stone must be thrown down one by one. Each one of these wrong ideas and wrong actions must be repented of, rejected, and renounced. Pulling down strongholds means "to demolish or destroy fortresses." Casting down arguments includes our imaginations and destroying speculations.

Paragraph A. I just gave you three different translations of the Bible; for example, in The New King James Version (NKJV), it talks about pulling down strongholds, while the NIV says *demolish* and the NASB talks about destroying fortresses. It's all the same idea. I gave you these different translations so you can compare the language. They're all consistent with each other. We pull down a fortress or a demonic stronghold. We cast down the arguments. The way you pull down a stronghold is that you cast the argument that's essential and integral to the existence of that stronghold in your mind.

Paragraph C. We must pull down, cast down, or dismantle these strongholds one by one. Those are the two phrases Paul used in the NKJV: pulling down and casting down. He's talking about the very same idea. Another

way to say it is that we dismantle the stronghold. We tear it down, we pull it down, we dismantle it, and we break it up. It's that stone wall. Here's how we break this fortress that's built around our mind: we tear it down stone by stone, because it's built stone by stone.

For example, I talked to one guy who was addicted to pornography. He said, "I'm going to stay on pornography. I'm in so much bondage to pornography. How do I get free?"

I said, "The same way you got into bondage: day by day, step by step, and stone by stone. You didn't get into bondage in one day. It took you a while to get demonized. You can break the power of the demon immediately, but the demon won't leave and stay gone unless you change your mindset."

The mindset must be changed as well. It takes time to change your mindset. The battle is in the mind. You can get rid of any problem. We use the name of Jesus, take authority over darkness, and we have the indwelling Spirit that will inspire us and help us. Also, it's very important that our mind must come into agreement with the Word of God. Again, this stone wall is a fortress built around you by Satan; he couldn't do it without your participation. He doesn't have the right to just dominate your life. He can only afflict you to the measure of your agreement and your participation. It really matters what you believe and what you do. Beloved, it really, really matters what you believe and what you do. Demons are around you all the time, beckoning you to take makes the wrong choices in behavior, mindsets, and belief systems. They can't touch you in certain ways until you agree. Then you're giving the keys of your life to them, and opening a door.

THE WORD OF GOD IS LIKE A HAMMER THAT BREAKS THE ROCK IN PIECES

Demons get very frustrated with the person who they're trying to assault if the person resists them. We have the ability to not give the demons the key. If you choose not to walk in darkness, to keep renouncing the wrong ideas, and agree with the Word of God, then you'll resist the devil. That keeps demons at bay. It keeps them at a distance. They can't do what they want to do in that person's life. Then the Word of God is like a hammer. Look at the end of paragraph C. The Word of God is like a hammer—like a sledgehammer slamming against this wall breaking it stone by stone. We speak the Word of God; we make it our confession. We have ideas in our mind against God and against ourselves, and little by little, they're dismantled and broken.

We can cast a demon out in one moment, but it takes time to renew the mind. The demon will come right back if the mind is not renewed. The way the demon had access in the first place is that we had agreement with that demon. A person can get a demon cast out of them. They'll come to a prayer line and say, "I want to be free." We pray and that heightened energy of darkness can leave you. The way that heightened energy of darkness or that demonic attack initially came, was that you agreed with the demon. If a person doesn't change what they think and what they do, the demon will come back. Jesus said that the demonic comes back with seven more demons even stronger than themselves (Mt. 12:43-45). It's not a small thing what we do with our minds and what we do with our bodies, because demons are waiting for us to give them legal access to greater involvement in our life. They have great power, but the Holy Spirit is as well.

Again, some people say, "Holy Spirit, just do it."

The Holy Spirit might answer, "No, I will do it in cooperation with you. You must agree with Me in your thinking and in your choices if you want Me to do it."

The person might argue, “No, I want to just stay like I am and have the bondage go.” A lot of believers have this confused idea. They pray, “God, set me free, set me free, set me free.” They aren’t interested in changing their mindset or their life choices.

The Holy Spirit says, “No, I won’t set you free. I will only do it in participation with you.” The demons are the same way.

NUMBER ONE: WE EXPOSE THE LIES

There are three ways we cast down an argument, or pull down a fortress. Again, that’s the same thing. To cast down an argument means to pull down a fortress. He’s saying the same thing in a different way.

Number one: we expose the lies. We identify the lies that we bought into against God and against ourselves. That’s what the teaching of the Word does. We expose the lies that we believe in, but those lies open doors to darkness and bring our emotions into bondage. We begin with the truth about God as our Father, Jesus as our Bridegroom, and about ourselves as sons of God—men and women both—and our identity as the Bride of Christ—men and women both. We start with the truth of who He is and then the truth about who we are. That’s where it begins.

Many believers, though they might technically know this information, don’t actually apply it to their life. They don’t actually engage with that information in any deep way at all. It’s intellectual, biblical information, but it doesn’t free them from bondage because they don’t actually use it. It’s easy to use it. It’s these three things. We identify the lies. We expose them by identifying them.

NUMBER TWO: WE RENOUNCE OUR AGREEMENT

Number two: we renounce our agreement with them. This is critical. You can’t renounce them if you don’t identify them. A lot of guys say, “I will renounce anything.” They have all these wrong ideas about God and who they are in Christ, but they don’t even know they’re wrong ideas. They never get to step two because they don’t do step one.

NUMBER THREE: WE RESIST SATAN

Number three: we resist Satan. This means that even though we’ve identified the lies and broken our agreement, the demons will still come with these heightened moments of energized sensations of lust, fear, or anxiety to see if the demon can lure us back into agreement with darkness.

The next guy comes with the same emotion, and he’s saying, “I’m not free! I’m not free!”

The demon is also saying, “You’re not free! You’re not free! The gospel isn’t strong enough for you!”

The guy starts thinking, “It doesn’t work for me. I’m the one guy it doesn’t work for.”

The demon echoes, “Yes, you’re the one guy it doesn’t work for!” That demon is breathing down his neck. Picture a dragon with fire breath breathing on your spirit with a heightened fear and anxiety. James says we must resist him (Js. 4:7). We use the authority of the name of Jesus. We say, “In the name of Jesus, be gone.” That’s so simple, but I tell you it’s mighty. It’s mighty in God if you do it, which means it’s effective.

Many people just ride the storm out. I'm talking about believers. They have this heightened negative feeling. They just hang in there. They grab another something that has a negative impact on them, and they put it in their body—whatever it is. They deal with the stress in a completely wrong way. That demon could be rebuked, but they never actually do it. They might even think about rebuking the demon. They might even say, "I wish this would leave. I just wish this demon would leave!"

The demon might say, "I'm not going to leave because you want me to leave. I'm not going to leave if you complain about me. I will only leave if you use the name of Jesus, command me to leave, and mean it." It's real.

Many believers don't get to step three. They endure this negative surge that hits their emotions.

Roman numeral V. 2 Corinthians 11. Now Paul, in 2 Corinthians 10, described how strongholds work. It's very simple; they're ideas. They're arguments. It's knowledge against God instead of knowledge in agreement with God. It's knowledge. It's information. That's how it starts.

BELIEVERS LIVE IN DESTRUCTION BECAUSE THEY LACK KNOWLEDGE

As simple as it is, Hosea says that people are destroyed for lack of knowledge (Hos. 4:6). Believers live in destruction because they lack knowledge. Jesus said it positively in John 8:32: "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (Jn. 8:32). If you know truth and you act on it, you'll be liberated in your mind, in your heart, and in your body. If you know truth and act on it, you'll be liberated. Many people don't know the truth. They know to ask forgiveness, to repent, and to give their life to Jesus, but they don't really know the truth about who Jesus is and who they are to Him.

Then some actually learn it: they know the truth, but they don't act on it when the negative pressure is on their heart. They just endure the negative and hope it goes away. They don't confess the Word, resist the devil, or actually act on the truth at a heart level. Beloved, your life can be changed in a profound way in a short amount of time by these simple, mighty weapons: by engaging them and using them as 2 Corinthians 11 tells us to do.

There are two essential truths that we need to come into agreement with to break strongholds in our mind. These truths are related to Jesus as the Bridegroom God. Look at 2 Corinthians 11. "Oh, that you would bear with me in a little folly—and indeed you do bear with me. For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ" (2 Cor. 11:2-3). Paul said, "I'm jealous for you with godly jealousy!"

"I HAVE BETROTHED YOU TO ONE HUSBAND"

He's going to say two powerful things here: "I've betrothed you to one Husband." To be *betrothed* means to be engaged. If a young man or young woman gets engaged, that's the word we would use: "Hey, they got engaged last week." The other word is *betrothed*. It's the same idea and the same concept. Paul said, "I betrothed you to one Husband—Jesus the Bridegroom God." In other words, "When I led you to Christ, on the day you were born again, I led you into a relationship to where you were actually betrothed to the Lord. You became officially engaged to Him."

In the ancient world, when a man or woman was engaged, that was step one of being legally married. In the modern world, when two people are engaged, they break up. People say, "Well, they broke their engagement." However, in the ancient world, if you were engaged and broke the engagement, you had to get a legal divorce.

You're legally married when you're engaged; however, the marriage isn't consummated until a year or two later at the wedding celebration. From a biblical point of view, we're engaged to the Lord, meaning that we're legally married in this age. And the second coming is the consummation of the marriage where there's no veil between us. We see Him face to face. Right now, in the whole natural realm, we can't see Him face to face, but we can see Him by faith. Though we're legally married to Him now, though now we're betrothed; at the day of the second coming, the marriage is consummated and fully joined.

It's as if Paul said, "Did you know that the day I led you to Christ and you were born again, you're actually engaged? Did you know that you were legally married to Jesus?"

The Corinthians might have responded, "No, we didn't know that." There are massive implications here related to who God is, as the Bridegroom God, and to us as the cherished bride.

YOU HAVE BEEN PRESENTED AS A CHASTE VIRGIN BEFORE CHRIST

But Paul goes on to make another statement. He basically says, "I did this that I might present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." The word *chaste* is translated in some Bibles as the word *pure*. He's basically saying, "The day you were born again, you were brought into a relationship where you were engaged." In that context, you're legally married to the Lord. He's your Bridegroom God. In one moment, you became—as a free gift—a pure virgin in God's sight. Everything that was against you has been wiped away, and you're completely clean before Him. These are the two truths, and others as well, that the devil doesn't want you to know. He doesn't want you to know this.

DON'T LET YOUR MINDS BE CORRUPTED FROM THE SIMPLICITY THAT IS IN CHRIST

Paul went on to say in 2 Corinthians 11:3: "But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ" (2 Cor. 11:3). The devil came to Eve in the garden of Eden and tricked her. It wasn't straightforward; it was crafty. It's as if Paul said, "Here's what I fear: in the same way the devil tricked Eve in a crafty way, he's tricking you now. He's leading you away from the simplicity of who you're before Jesus." The devil wants to complicate it. He wants you never to live in freedom, but to live in bondage.

Paragraph B. You're betrothed to one Husband. The implication is that Jesus is the Bridegroom God, and you're a cherished bride. You're legally married to Him the day you're born again. What does this mean practically? He desires you. That's the meaning. He doesn't just stamp your passport so that you can go to heaven when you die. He desires you. You're the one He wants. When the Lord said yes, the day you were born again, He received you into a betrothed relationship. He received you as His bride literally. He said, "I want you. You're the one I want." This is one of the truths the devil doesn't want any believer to get, because if you believe He actually desires you and He wants you, you'll run to Him instead of running from Him, even when you stumble in your weakness. The devil doesn't want you running to Him. He wants you running from Him with lies about Him so that you would live in greater agreement with darkness. The devil wants you to be in greater bondage and strongholds, like a fortress built around your life, keeping the blessing of God out of your life. He wants you.

YOU WILL SHARE THE BEAUTY HE POSSESSES AND IMPARTS TO HIS PEOPLE

Look at paragraph B. As a bridegroom God, He has deep emotions for us. He has commitments to us. Did you know that as the Bridegroom God, He's committed to share His heart with you, to share His throne with you?

We will rule the earth with Him and He will share the secrets of His heart with you, to share the very beauty He possesses and imparts to His people.

YOU'RE NOT JUST A WORKER; YOU'RE THE ONE HE WANTS

Beloved, do you know who you are to Him? We don't want to believe other than this about Jesus. Many believers don't know anything about this type of relationship with Jesus. They think Jesus stamped their passport. They're going to go to heaven when they die. Hopefully this will give them a few blessings between now and then, and hopefully they'll use them a little.

The Lord says, "I have so much more. You're betrothed to Me. You're not just a worker; You're the one I want. I'm not using you as slave labor. I actually like you. I want you—even you."

Well, the guy says, "Yeah, but not me, I'm so messed up. I'm disqualified."

Paul went on to make the next point: He presents you as a chaste virgin. You say, "Well, you know, I know He *would* want me, but if you only knew what I did."

Beloved, if you only knew what Jesus did on the cross.

The guy might respond, "Yeah, but if you knew what I did." No, it's not what you did; it's what He did. He literally made you a pure, chaste virgin, in one moment the day you were born again. The disqualification has been removed forever. We stand as a pure virgin in His sight by receiving the gift of righteousness. This happened the moment we were born again.

I have here in 2 Corinthians 5:21, "We have become the righteousness of God in Christ" (2 Cor. 5:21, paraphrased). We have become the righteousness of God. In 2 Corinthians, Paul says you're a pure virgin, and he's actually referring back to this verse. You became the righteousness of God, meaning the very righteousness that Jesus possesses He gave to you fully in one moment as a free gift. You didn't earn it or deserve it little by little. It was given to you in one moment of time as an absolutely free gift. You're a pure virgin. You don't have to buy the lie that you're disqualified. That betrothed relationship idea isn't going to work for you. Beloved, it will work for you because you have received the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus.

WE'RE DECLARED AS CLEAN AS JESUS IN THE SIGHT OF THE FATHER

Paragraph C. We're declared—listen to this, as this is outrageously glorious—we're declared as righteous, or as clean as Jesus is in the sight of the Father as a free gift. You're as clean before the Father as Jesus, for it is His righteousness that's given you. Did you know that that righteousness could not improve? A thousand or a million years from now, you'll not have a greater righteousness than the righteousness you received the moment you were born again. It can't improve because it's God's righteousness. It's not sort of His righteousness; it is His righteousness. It will never improve.

Paragraph D. Many people they mistake their spiritual immaturity for rebellion. They're immature, so they agree with darkness about their ideas about God. It's out of immaturity. They make choices where they agree with darkness. It's immaturity. They mistake that with being a hopeless hypocrite and a rebel. An immature believer and a rebellious person have a very different heart. The enemy comes when they stumble and says,

“You’re a hopeless hypocrite. You’re fake. Everything about you is fake in your walk with God!” Then the enemy gets us running from Jesus instead of running to Him.

Paragraph E. How do you see yourself? This is critical. How do you see yourself? Are you a slave who struggles to love God? Or are you a lover of God who struggles with sin? When you see yourself, are you a slave of sin who struggles to love God, or are you a lover of God who still struggles with sin?

They’re really different. If you’re getting on an airplane, and one says New York and one says California, you had better get the right one because they’re going in totally opposite directions. Many believers look at themselves as a slave of sin struggling to love when they should see themselves as a lover of God. They say to themselves, “That’s who I am, that’s what I do. Yes, I still struggle with sin. I’m a lover of God. That’s what I do.”

“I’M IN LOVE WITH GOD AND GOD’S IN LOVE WITH ME”

I love the song by Misty, “I’m in love with God and God’s in love with me; this is who I’m and this is who I’ll be, and that settles it.” I love that music; you can tell she had some energy when she wrote that music. That settles it completely.

Do you define yourself by your struggle, or do you define yourself by the fact that He desires you and His work on the cross? How do you define yourself? Do you say to yourself, “Ah man, I’m in bondage to pornography, and I’m in depression? No one likes me. I have a spirit of rejection.”

Those may be true in terms of some of the activities in your life and mindset, but that’s not who you are. You’re the one God desires. You’re the one of whom He said, “I want to marry you. You’re the one I want. I’ve made a way. I have made you totally free. That’s who you are.”

When we feel shameful, we act in this way. Many believers, when they feel ashamed, they live in shameful ways. If you feel dirty, you’ll live dirty. It’s true. If you feel clean—even if you know the truth of your struggles, but you feel clean because He gave you the gift of righteousness, and He desires you—you’ll feel dignity. You’ll live clean, and you’ll live with a sense of dignity. This is how the stronghold is broken—by this truth. You’re betrothed, and you’re a chaste virgin. When you feel desired by God, His betrothed, His bride, when you feel clean as a virgin, you’ll live differently. You’ll live with confidence.

WE SEE GOD’S DESIRE FOR US, AND WE SEE OURSELVES AS A CHASTE VIRGIN

Paragraph G. These two truths redefine our life: we see God’s desire and longing for us, and then we see ourselves as a virgin. I want to identify these two truths. You’re betrothed; you’re the one God desires. You’re made a chaste virgin. These two truths redefine your life, and they break strongholds. They break the arguments that the devil puts in our minds about God. The devil lies and says, “He’s not the kind of God who desires people like this. He’s not the kind of God who cleanses people this way.” Those are lies. Those are arguments. We cast those arguments down. We take those stones and that wall built against us. We cast those stones down one by one. We break up that wall up the confession of the Word of God in our relationship with God. We speak the truth about who we are.

Roman numeral VI. Let's just read it again to get the flow. 2 Corinthians 11:3-4. Paul said, "I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by craftiness" (2 Cor. 11:3)—that's the key word, *craftiness*. It's not blatant; it's secretly tricking you into wrong ideas.

A guy said, "My church never taught me that."

"Well, I don't know what to say about that. We go by the Bible. I don't know what your church taught you."

The guy responds, "I never thought this before."

"That doesn't matter. We go by the Bible, not what you used to think."

The guy says, "My youth group never said that." Throw all that away. What we care about is what the Bible says, not what your tradition or your upbringing said if it's not in agreement with the Bible.

Paul said, "In the same way the devil deceived Eve by craftiness, so the devil wants your minds corrupted" (2 Corinthians 11:3, paraphrased). In other words, he wants your minds led away from the simplicity of Christ. Beloved, there's the simplicity of what you receive in Jesus. It's so simple, anyone can believe it, but so few actually engage in their relationship with God based on these truths. They might even know them. If this is new to you tonight, now you know it; however, the issue is that you actually need to engage with these truths. In other words, when you feel contrary, will you say, "Devil, you're a liar. This is who I am! I confess the Word. Jesus, this is who I am to you"?

You have to come into agreement and cast down the arguments against God by renouncing them. Paul goes on and says it clearly. "For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted—you may well put up with it" (2 Cor. 11:4)!

Here they are in the church of Corinth. Here are these Bible teachers in the church of Corinth. They're preaching a different Jesus, a different spirit, and a different gospel. Here's basically what Paul says at the end of the passage: "You put up with them. You accept what they say. You agree with them. But, they aren't preaching the Jesus of the New Testament. It's Jesus of their own ideas. It has a different spirit, and it's a different gospel. You just put up with it. Why? Tell them to come into agreement with the real Jesus."

THE TRUE GOSPEL IS MOTIVATED BY THE FREE GIFT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Paragraph A. As the serpent, Satan, deceived Eve with craftiness, so false teachers (called Judaizers) deceived the Corinthian church with lies about Jesus and the gospel. They were preaching another Jesus. These false teachers were called Judaizers. They preached Jesus of Nazareth. They believed in the Jesus of Nazareth. Historically, they say, "Yes, the Guy who died on the cross, that's the Guy we preach."

The Corinthians say, "Sounds like the same Guy Paul preaches!"

Paul says, "No, they use the same name, but they have very different ideas. They don't believe He gave a free gift of righteousness; rather, they believed you had to earn it. That's a different Jesus. They didn't believe He desired them to be betrothed to Him. They didn't believe that kind of stuff. That's another Jesus. That isn't the

Jesus I preach. The Jesus that I preach gave the free gift to you, and He desires you. He's betrothed to you. That's the only Jesus you want to believe in."

A lot of believers say, "I've never heard about these things." Well, it's time to hear about them. I don't mean from me. It's time for them to hear about them through you. I'm talking about you telling them.

Paul said, "It's another gospel."

They say, "But we preached Jesus dying on the cross."

Paul said, "Yeah, I know they say that, but they have another gospel. The true gospel is motivated by the free gift of righteousness and Jesus' heart for His people." We don't earn His favor; we receive it freely. We don't deserve His desire. He desires us because of who He is. That's the gospel. Paul said, "These guys don't tell you this. It's another gospel. They use similar terms, but it's not the same gospel."

Paul said, "They have a different spirit. They operate in a spirit of fear, a spirit of condemnation, and a spirit of bondage."

Beloved, we operate in a spirit of faith, or a spirit of confidence before God—confidence with God. The spirit of bondage will never empower the human heart to grow in love—never. It's a different spirit.

Let's stand. I'm going to read paragraph B to you. I'm going to pray this over you. We have to dismantle spiritual strongholds. Paragraph B. I summarize it. We cast down the lies against Jesus and who we are in Jesus. We cast those lies down. We say, "No." We cast them down. We don't agree with those lies. We renounce them. We break our agreement with those lies. We're betrothed. God desires us. We're virgins. We're clean before Him. He desires us. We're accepted fully as first-class citizens in His sight.

Beloved, when we have confidence like this, we run to Him with an open spirit. We will grow. What happens when our mind changes? Then our emotions change a little way down the road. When your mind changes, your emotions get freed, and when your emotions get freed, your behavior changes. A lot of people start with their behavior, and we need to change our behavior. We need to resist negative things in our behavior, but I tell you, the way to make a permanent change is to change your mind; then a little while later, your emotions will follow, and you feel different.

MINISTRY TIME

When your emotions are changed, your behavior will change in a consistent and a deep way. We're going to worship for a few moments, and then we're going to ask Him to break some strongholds. He won't break them unless you're in agreement. It's you and Him together breaking that stronghold, using the name of Jesus. Don't ask Him to do it.

He says, "No, I want you to cast down the argument. I already don't believe the argument. You're the one who needs to cast it down. I don't buy it."

We're going to work with the Lord to break that argument in just a moment. Then we're going to ask the Lord for healing. There are physical healings that are related to emotional and mental strongholds. Jesus, here we are. Holy Spirit, here we are.