

Session 1 Pulling Down Spiritual Strongholds (2 Cor. 10-11)

I. WE MUST PULL DOWN SPIRITUAL STRONGHOLDS

A. Paul gave us understanding on how we can pull down spiritual strongholds in our life.

³For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. ⁴For 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)

B. A stronghold was a strongly fortified defensive structure. It was a fort or fortified city that often included a large stone wall surrounding it. Some of these walls were as high as fifty feet and were ten feet thick. Their purpose was to keep an invading army out of the city.

C. Paul used the analogy of an ancient stronghold or fortress to teach a spiritual truth describing how Satan attacks us and how we overcome it. He used a positive word picture of a stronghold (wall of stone) that protected a city to illustrate the negative way in which Satan holds people in bondage.

D. Jesus described Satan as a strong man who seeks to guard his house from being “plundered” by Jesus so that Satan may hold people in bondage (Mt. 12:28-29).

²⁸But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you. ²⁹Or how can one enter a strong man’s house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house. (Mt. 12:28-29)

E. Satan seeks to establish spiritual strongholds in our mind to keep God’s presence out of our life, so as to keep us in bondage to him. He works to establish “walls of accusation” in our mind against God to keep the Holy Spirit’s liberating presence from invading our life and freeing our heart.

II. DIFFERENT TYPES OF STRONGHOLDS

A. ***Personal strongholds***: Strongholds in our mind are a collection of ideas that are in agreement with Satan. These lies accuse Jesus and His leadership, and then they accuse our standing before Him. They are arguments or lies about His character, power, and wisdom and about our relationship to Him. Once we believe lies about God, then we believe lies about who we are in Christ. Renouncing wrong ideas or lies about God is foundational to dismantling personal strongholds.

B. ***Cultural strongholds***: Strongholds in our culture consist of actions and laws in a specific region that are in agreement with Satan and against God’s righteousness. Repentance for these actions and laws along with intercession for God’s mercy is one way to dismantle cultural strongholds.

- C. **Cosmic strongholds:** Strongholds in the spiritual realm are caused by territorial spirits or demons that energize entire geographic areas to embrace wicked behavior and evil ideas. There is a demonic hierarchy above each region of the earth (Eph. 6:12; Dan. 10:12, 20-21). Intercession with repentance in solemn assemblies is one way to dismantle cosmic strongholds (Joel 2:12-17).

III. SPIRITUAL STRONGHOLDS ARE ESTABLISHED BY AGREEING WITH DARKNESS

- A. Strongholds are established by opening doors to Satan through sinful actions and belief systems. Satan's sphere of activity is the domain of darkness. Wherever there is darkness, he has legal access. If darkness is in our hearts, then he has legal access to us. Jesus had no place of darkness or agreement with Satan in His life. Thus, Jesus gave Satan no legal access points into His life.

³⁰For the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me. (Jn. 14:30)

- B. Sometimes we feel an irrationally heightened lust, fear, oppression, or anxiety. We resist these demonic influences by committing to obey Jesus and declaring the truth of God's Word. In this way, we can quench all the demonic missiles with their heightened energy against our lives.

¹⁶You will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one... (Eph. 6:16)

- C. When we sin, we give Satan legal entry into our lives to work in a greater way in us. Satan adds a heightened demonic energy to our sin as we yield to it. He wants our weaknesses to escalate to wickedness. Lust does not stop with one act, but continues to grow until it is full-grown (Jas. 1:15). Sin that is not rejected continues to increase in our life. Augustine said, "Lust yielded to becomes a habit, and a habit not resisted becomes a necessity."

¹⁴Each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his desires...¹⁵When desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. (Jas. 1:14-15)

IV. PULLING DOWN STRONGHOLDS OF THE MIND

- A. Paul exhorted believers to pull down spiritual strongholds (2 Cor. 10:4-5).

⁴The weapons of our warfare are...mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, ⁵casting 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. 10:4-5)

- B. **Pulling down strongholds** (NKJ, KJV); demolish (NIV); or destruction of fortresses (NAS). **Casting down arguments** (NKJ); imaginations (KJV); or destroying speculations (NAS). **Every high thing** (NKJ); every pretension that sets itself up (NIV); every lofty thing raised up (NAS); every proud obstacle (RSV); or every high thing that exalteth itself against (KJV).

- C. **Every high thing:** This speaks of demonic activities and ideas that are like a high or massive wall that hinders God’s blessing in our lives. Demonic powers exalt themselves by seducing us to believe their lies that attack the truth about God and who His people are before Him.
- D. We must pull down, cast down, or dismantle these strongholds one by one. The spiritual stone wall in our minds must be dismantled stone by stone. Every single stone of accusation in our mind against God and His salvation must be cast down. God’s Word is like a hammer that strikes the “demonic wall” in our minds and demolishes it stone by stone or idea by idea.
- E. We cast down lies by bringing our thoughts into captivity to God, into agreement with His Word. We fill our mind with the Word and make it a slave that is captive to the truth. We do this by breaking our agreement with false ideas and arguments against God.
- F. Three ways in which we cast down arguments against God in our life:
 - 1. We **expose the lies** that are lodged in our mind by identifying them. Right thinking is the place we begin to dismantle personal strongholds. Renewing our mind by the Word soon leads to emotional change, which in time results in the transformation of our behavior.
 - 2. We **renounce our agreement** with those lies. Sin gives demons the legal permission to operate in our lives. We shut the door by repentance and the renewing of our minds.
 - 3. We **resist Satan** and his heightened energy against us, which is referred to as flaming missiles or fiery darts (Eph. 6:16), by using the authority of Jesus’ name (Eph. 6:10-11).
⁷Submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. (Jas. 4:7)

V. ARGUMENTS AGAINST GOD THAT MUST BE CAST DOWN: TWO ESSENTIAL TRUTHS

- A. To understand how to overcome strongholds, we must see 2 Cor. 10:3-5 in relation to 2 Cor. 11. In 2 Cor. 10:3-5, Paul called us to spiritual warfare, then gave an application of it in 2 Cor. 11:2-4. Paul declared two truths that are foundational to disarming personal strongholds in our mind.
²For 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. ³But 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. 11:2-3)
- B. **Betrothed to one husband:** He desires you. You are the one that He wants! He wants you as His eternal partner. You are beautiful in His sight. The beauty that He possesses is the beauty that He freely imparts to us in salvation (Isa. 61:3). Jesus has deep *emotions* for us and is *committed* to sharing His heart, throne, secrets, and beauty with us. In the ancient world, a couple was legally married on the day they were betrothed. We were betrothed, or “engaged,” to Jesus on the day we were born again. The consummation of the marriage is in the age to come (Rev. 19:7-9).

- C. ***A chaste virgin***: The moment we are born again we stand as a chaste or pure virgin in God's sight by receiving the gift of Jesus' righteousness. We are declared as righteous or as clean before God as Jesus is. The righteousness we receive cannot be improved on because it is God's very own righteousness. Everything that legally hinders us from receiving God's affections is removed.
- ¹⁷If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new...²¹For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Cor. 5:17-21)***
- D. Many mistake their spiritual immaturity for being a hopeless hypocrite who is rebellious. The devil wants us to mistake weakness for rebellion so that we give up with despair and hopelessness.
- E. Our core spiritual identity: Are we slaves to sin who struggle to love God? Or are we lovers of God who struggle with sin? Though our love for God may be weak, it is still real. Weak love is not false.
- F. We do not define ourselves by our struggles, but by His work on the cross and His desire for us. When we feel shame, we live shamefully. When we feel clean and filled with dignity, we will live cleanly and with dignity. When we feel desired by God and clean, we will live differently. When we feel pure, without shame or condemnation, we have great confidence before Him.
- G. These two truths redefine our life: we see God's desire for us, and we see ourselves as a virgin. These two truths disarm even our most powerful negative emotions such as the fear of rejection. We must turn our eyes from past failures and all the voices that condemn us. We must unfetter ourselves from man's applause and condemnation so that we can receive God's truth about us.

VI. DECEIVED BY FALSE TEACHINGS

- A. In context Paul is exhorting believers to pull down spiritual strongholds (2 Cor. 10:4-5) by exposing and renouncing lies against Jesus and the truth of the gospel (2 Cor. 11:3-4).
- ³I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted [led astray, NAS] from the simplicity that is in Christ. ⁴For 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. 11:3-4)***
- B. As the serpent, Satan, deceived Eve with craftiness, so false teachers (called Judaizers) deceived the Corinthians with lies about Jesus and the gospel. Satan's goal was that the Corinthians would leave the simplicity of being received by God that came from knowing He desired them and had freely given them His righteousness. The Judaizers preached another Jesus and operated in a different spirit with a different gospel from Paul!

1. **Another Jesus:** The Judaizers preached “another Jesus.” They believed that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah, but not one who offered the gift of righteousness by faith, nor was He understood as the Bridegroom God filled with desire for His people. Once we believe lies about God, then we believe lies about who we are in Christ. We can only know the truth about *our* heart as we understand the truth about *God’s* heart.
 2. **Another gospel:** The true gospel is motivated by God’s free gift and deep desire for us. The false gospel that they received called them to *earn* God’s favor and salvation. The gospel they received kept them in the identity of a slave of sin.
 3. **A different spirit:** They operated in a spirit of condemnation, fear, and bondage. The spirit of bondage never empowers our heart in love or imparts the power to obey God.
- C. **Summary:** Paul used God’s Word to dismantle spiritual strongholds in their lives by casting down lies or accusations against Jesus and lies concerning who they were in Christ. In essence, he declared they were betrothed to Jesus or desired by God, and stood as virgins, clean before God.