

7

PULLING DOWN STRONGHOLDS

We're At War!

One of the critical points we've established from our discourse so far is that our words and actions are guided by our predominant thoughts. Now, if you don't arrest and control your thoughts, you'll find yourself saying and doing terrible things you never dreamed you could say or do. That's because there's a constant assault of the devil against your mind. He's always seeking to attack and pollute your mind, so he can render you helpless and ineffective in the things of the spirit.

Scripture shows us that we're engaged in an on-going spiritual warfare:

"for though we walk in the flesh, we do

not war after the flesh...”

(2 Corinthians 10:3).

“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Ephesians 6:12).

But it also lets us know we've been equipped with divine weaponry that assures our victory:

“(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;” (2 Corinthians 10:4-5).

You'll observe that Paul, here, was speaking

about things that go on (or reside) in the mind—strongholds, imaginations, thoughts, and “every high thing,” indicating that our minds are the battlefield of that spiritual warfare.

Strongholds, Imaginations, Thoughts, and “Every High Thing”

“Strongholds,” in the context in which it’s used in 2 Corinthians 10:4, isn’t talking about a fortified physical structure or some external force the devil stirs up against you. It’s referring to ideas, theories, imaginations, reasonings, beliefs, etc., contrary to God’s Word that attack and capture people’s minds, causing them to think, act, and respond in a certain way and, consequently, holding them back from enjoying their inheritance in Christ.

Strongholds can also be thoughts that have been established in your mind as a result of your background and the way you were brought up to

think. They're formed as the results of the things you've seen, heard, and experienced, and the habits and character you formed before or even after you were born again. They could also be cultural and traditional beliefs that may even be recognised and accepted as societal norms. But all they do is prevent new thoughts from God from entering your mind.

In essence, strongholds are mental walls of containment that prevent people from advancing in the things of God.

For example, someone thinks, "I'm never going to succeed," because his grandfather and his father before him were failures. Another one says, "Every time something good is about to happen to me, all hell breaks loose and I miss my opportunity," because that used to be his experience. These are strongholds!

Paul also talked about "every high thing":

“Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God...” (2 Corinthians 10:5).

This refers to falsely exalted systems of ethics, religion, philosophy, etc., set forth by men to oppose and defy the knowledge of God. These are vain, unfounded opinions, dogmas, mind-sets, biases, superstitions, and beliefs that have become mental barriers erected in people’s minds against the knowledge of God.

STRONGHOLDS ARE MENTAL WALLS OF CONTAINMENT THAT PREVENT PEOPLE FROM ADVANCING IN THE THINGS OF GOD

But thanks be unto God who has fortified us with an impregnable armour and made us invulnerable to these satanic onslaughts against the mind. The Word shows us we’ve been equipped with weapons that are mighty through God to pull down every thought and cast down every imagination presented to us

by the devil, to bring down every high thing that exalts itself above the knowledge of God, and to take captive every thought to obey Christ (the Word). We're able, with our weapons, to set men free who are held in bondage through these satanic manipulations, Hallelujah!

The Armour Of God

We've established that we're engaged in a conflict with satanic forces (whether or not we like it or are aware of it). And since it's a spiritual warfare, we can only engage the enemy, using spiritual weaponry (2 Corinthians 10:4).

In Ephesians 6:13-17, Paul itemises the different parts of our formidable and impregnable armour.

“Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore,

having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:"

So here's what our armour consists of:

1. The belt of truth
2. The breastplate of righteousness
3. The boots of preparedness of the gospel
4. The shield of faith
5. The helmet of salvation, and
6. The sword of the Spirit

Looking closely at each of these weapons, you'll observe that only one—the sword of the Spirit—is an offensive weapon; all the others are for defense

against attacks.

Now, the rendering of the 16th verse in the KJV may be a little misleading. It says, *“Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked,”* and it seems to suggest that the shield of faith is the final and most important item of the Christian’s armour. An enlightening commentary by W. J. Conybeare argues that had this been the case, the shield of faith would have been listed last, but Paul went on to mention two more items of the armour after the shield of faith.

So instead of “above all,” Conybeare says, *“... take up to cover you the shield of faith, wherewith you shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the Evil One”* (Ephesians 6:16).

The Amplified Bible renders it thus: *“Lift up over all the [covering] shield of saving faith, upon which you can quench all the flaming missiles of the wicked*

[one].”

In this teaching about the Christian’s armour, Paul draws an interesting parallel with the Roman soldier’s armour. The Greek word translated “shield” here is “thureos,” and it is used specifically of the shield wielded by the heavily-armed Roman infantry. It was a large, four by two-and-a-half feet, oblong shield, and not the comparatively small, round one. One of the most dangerous weapons in ancient warfare was the fiery dart—an arrow tipped with tow dipped in pitch. The pitch-soaked tow was set alight and the flaming arrow launched at the enemy. To combat this, the Roman soldier, fully covered under or behind his shield, presented it to the arrow, which was quenched upon sinking into the shield.

Paul here was saying that your shield of faith should be big and strong enough to protect and defend every part of you, such that the fiery darts

of the evil one wouldn't get through to any other part of your armour in the first place!

So take up your shield of faith to cover you completely, and quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. These fiery darts are thoughts the devil fires at people's minds, and they've destroyed lives and families, ruined businesses, caused wars, and ravaged nations. But with your shield of faith, you can and should quench every single dart the enemy fires at you.

Overthrowing The Reasonings Of The Disputer

2 Corinthians 10:3 says,

"For the weapons which I wield are not of fleshly weakness, but mighty in the strength of God to overthrow the strongholds of the adversaries.

Thereby can I overthrow the reasonings of the disputer, and pull down all lofty bulwarks that raise themselves against the knowledge of God, and bring every rebellious thought into captivity and subjection to Christ” (Conybeare).

What do you use to overthrow the strongholds of the adversary? The sword of the Spirit—the Word of God! Remember, this is the only offensive weapon in our arsenal. As you meditate on, mutter, and speak God’s Word, those mental barriers based on the wrong things you’ve heard and believed all your life come crashing down like the walls of Jericho, glory to God!

This is why I love to teach and preach the Word, because as I do, the wrong ideas and theories in the minds of men that they’ve lived with for so long, and the ungodly cultures and traditions that they’ve built their lives and societies upon come tumbling

down; those things can't stand the power of God's Word!

How about the reasonings of the disputer? You overthrow those as well with the sword of the Spirit. Satan is the disputer of God's Word. When God instructed Adam not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, satan (in the form of a serpent) went to Eve in the garden and questioned God's Word, and she was deceived (Genesis 3:1-6). He still operates the same way today.

For example, the Word declares that by Jesus' stripes, you were healed (1 Peter 2:24), but the devil will tell you, "Come on, do you think you were really healed? If you were, then why do you still feel the pain?"

You see, he'll challenge what God has said and try to cheat you out of your blessings through his negative reasonings and suggestions. But you can overthrow them all with the sword of the Spirit, and

as Conybeare's translation of Ephesians 6:13 says, "*...having overthrown them all...stand unshaken.*" So hold your ground and stand firm against the devil as you declare God's Word and lay claim to your inheritance in Christ.

With your armour in place, nothing the devil throws at you can penetrate. And with the sword of the Spirit, you can go on the offensive against him and tear down his strongholds. Glory to God!