

GUARD THE GATE

Guard Your Mind

2 Corinthians 10:3-5

Pulling Down Strongholds

2 Corinthians 10:3-5 (KJV) 3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: 4 (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) 5 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;

- In Paul's letter to the Corinthians describes spiritual warfare as a battle
- Our job as believers is to *destroy* strongholds
- What is a stronghold?
- A stronghold is a fortified place, a defensive structure ***Psalm 9:9 (KJV) 9 The LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble.***
- In Bible days, strongholds were places with thick walls, often located in places that were inaccessible like cliffs or on top of mountains
- In times of trouble, believers run to God *our stronghold*, our fortified place ***Proverbs 18:10 (KJV) 10 The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.***
- A stronghold can work for your good, but a stronghold can also work against you
- *A spiritual stronghold* are arguments, lofty opinions, attitudes, and thoughts raised against the knowledge of God
- The enemy operates from these dark, *hidden*, difficult to attack places
- Strongholds are rooted in *pride* because they rely on self
- Anything we place our trust in besides God can become a spiritual stronghold
- The word *stronghold* means both *fortress* and *prison*
- A fortress keeps *outsiders* from getting in
- A prison keeps *insiders* from getting out
- The stronghold that Paul is referring to in 2 Corinthians 10 are the lies the enemy has deeply ingrained our minds and beliefs that they can exert power over certain areas of your life
- You may even *know* the lies the enemy deposits in your mind are untrue, these thoughts still wage war in your mind attacking your self-esteem, self-worth, and your ability to resist accepting them as true
- The devil can use almost anything and build a stronghold in our minds; here are few examples spiritual strongholds:
 - *Unconfessed sin*
 - *Bitterness and unforgiveness*
 - *Discontentment*
 - *Jealousy*
 - *Addictions*

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- *Lying*
- *Low self-esteem*
- *Relationships*
- *Pleasing people*
- Any of these areas the devil will build a stronghold in your mind to take advantage of you and keep you in bondage
- Strongholds can be both *rational* and *irrational*
- *Rational strongholds* are lies the enemy tells us that seemingly makes sense, and we believe it, i.e., “you can’t own a business because you don’t have a degree, nor any business experience, nor or any money”
- *Irrational strongholds* are *unreasonable* fears, worries, doubts, etc., i.e., you have irrational fear of failure so you never attempt anything, you have irrational fear of sickness cause you to think any illness could be terminal, you have irrational fear of rejection and so you never build relationships, or ask for what you need

We Don’t Fight Like the World

[3] For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh:

- To deal with the strongholds, we must chose the right weapons
- Paul’s accusers were saying that Paul was a coward because in his letters he’d write a stern rebuke to the church and but he was gentle when he was speaking with them face to face
- They were saying Paul was “carnal” or worldly, meaning he was really not saved
- Paul responded by saying although we live in the flesh, the war is not waged in the flesh ***Ephesians 6:12 (KJV) 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.***
- Virtually everything we do is in the flesh, we eat, sleep, do business, work, etc.
- We still live on earth, even though we’re spiritual people
- What Paul is saying flesh and blood doesn’t have an impact in a spiritual battle
- When I speak of human strength, I’m not just speaking only of physical strength, but intellectual, economic, cultural strength, etc.
- The word *war* means “strategy” or campaign, meaning if we are going to win this spiritual battle, we can’t rely on an earthly strategy
- Paul knew to win the war, he would need a *divine strategy* and weaponry

The Weapons of Our Warfare

[4] (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)

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- If you are going to war, you must have weapons, and not just *any* weapons, they must be the *right* weapons
- Paul says the weapons of our warfare are not carnal
- What are these *carnal* weapons?
- Carnal weapons are our skill, ability, charisma, personality, genius, personal philosophy, etc.
- But the spiritual weapons we have at our disposal are not of this world and are extremely powerful
- Our spiritual weapons are “mighty through God”
- We have at our disposal literally the weapons of God, we have access to God’s arsenal
- What are our spiritual weapons?
- Your spiritual weapons are:
 1. *The Word of God* – is the sword of the Spirit
 2. Putting on the *whole* armor of God
 3. *Prayer and fasting* – strengthens you when you under attack and reveals to where your weaknesses are
 4. *The Holy Spirit* – empowers you to withstand and overcome any attack, helps you keep your commitment to God
- Jesus triumphed over death, hell and the grave using these weapons
- If these weapons worked for Jesus, they’ll work for you and me

The Power of Spiritual Weapons

Vs. 4 “...but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) [5] Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, ...”

- What can these spiritual weapons do?
- *These spiritual weapons pull down (destroy) strongholds*
- *God’s weapons will cast down imaginations*
- Destroying *imaginations* (logismos), those *uncontrolled thoughts* that are evil, lustful, immoral, unjust, wrong, untrue that set against the word of God and are designed to control and ultimately destroy you
- *God’s weapons will destroy every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God*
- *God’s Weapons will help you bring into captivity every thought into the obedience of Christ*
- The battle we’re in is for the mind and the devil knows whoever controls the mind, controls the person

Win the Battle by Guarding Your Mind

Vs. 5 “...and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;...”

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- Spiritual strongholds are not defeated and destroyed just by wanting to “do better” or “trying harder”
- You must bring *every thought captive* to the obedience of Christ, take captive every thought
- You must take your thoughts captive, before they take you captive!
- How do I do that?
- You must *replace* the enemy’s claim on your mind and emotions by *repenting* for allowing those strongholds to develop in the first place
 1. *Pray to God* by repenting and renouncing the sin that invited the stronghold in your life
 2. *Confess and repent* of the known sins in your life and receive God’s forgiveness **1 John 1:9 (KJV) 9 *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.***
 3. *Renew your mind* daily with the word of God **Romans 12:2 (KJV) 2 *And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.***
 4. *Be careful what you feed your mind* **Proverbs 15:14 (NLT) *A wise person is hungry for knowledge, while the fool feeds on trash.***
 - a. You’re not guarding your mind if you keep letting junk in
 - b. Ask yourself is what is the spiritual value of what I’m reading, listening to, going to see, etc. **Psalms 101:3 (KJV) 3 *“ I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes:...”***
 5. *Forgive the people who have hurt you*, not because they deserve it, but we forgive because Jesus forgave us **Ephesians 4:32 (KJV) 32 *And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.***
 - a. Have a daily time of prayer and worship
 6. *Be faithful* in attending church and receiving the preached word of God
 7. Be in fellowship with and accountable to strong believers
 8. *Reject the lies the devil had you believing* about yourself and focus on God’s truth **Philippians 4:8 (KJV) 8 *Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.***
 - a. You must replace the lies the enemy has told you with the Word of God
- The issue of your value and worth has already been settled at the Cross of Jesus Christ!