



Spiritual Warfare: Pulling Down Strongholds

2 CORINTHIANS 10:4-6

LESSON 1 – INTRODUCTION TO THE OBJECTIVE: PULLING DOWN STRONGHOLDS

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Spiritual Warfare – Lesson Schedule

January 9 – March 27, 2022

1. 2 Cor. 10:4-6 – Introduction: Pulling Down Strongholds
2. 2 Cor. 10:4-6 – Delusions and Unrighteous Deception
3. 2 Cor. 10:4-6 – The Weapons of Our Warfare
4. 2 Cor. 10:4-6 – Casting Down Arguments
5. 2 Cor. 10:4-6 – Taking Every Thought Captive
6. 2 Cor. 10:4-6 – Disobedience Punished
7. Eph. 4:17-19 – Have You Lost Your Mind?
8. Eph. 4:20-24 – Renewing Your Mind
9. James 1:14-15 – The Devil or Depravity?
10. James 4:7; 2 Peter 5:8-11 – Resisting the Devil

Pulling Down Strongholds

- ▶ 2 Corinthians 10:4 For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, 5 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, 6 and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.

Pulling Down Strongholds

- ▶ Spiritual warfare is just that, spiritual. “It is not a literal flesh and blood battle waged with earthly weapons and physical violence.” (John MacArthur, *The Truth War*, Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007, pgs. 28-39).
- ▶ “We do not wrestle against flesh and blood.” – Ephesians 6:12
- ▶ “Jesus answered, ‘My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here.’” – John 18:36

Pulling Down Strongholds

- ▶ Spiritual warfare is a battle for truth. It is a battle against false doctrines, evil ideologies, and false beliefs.
- ▶ The battlefield is in the mind and the goal is complete submission to the truth of God's Word.
- ▶ “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.” – John 5:24
- ▶ It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life. – John 6:63

Pulling Down Strongholds

- ▶ The Power of False Beliefs
- ▶ Belief is evidenced in behavior - everybody believes something, whether it is true or false, and we act on what we believe. In other words, faith affects behavior.
- ▶ Another way to say that is that those in the Scripture who are said to have had faith did things as a result. Faith produces action. Faith works.
- ▶ Let's make a practical application here – if we claim to believe something but that belief does not result in action or behavior then we really do not believe what we claim to believe. The best example I ever heard of this, which I have used often, came from my mentor, and he stated it this way: “If you are in the woods and believe that you hear a bear coming to get you, you will run just as fast as if a bear is really there coming to get you.”

Pulling Down Strongholds

- ▶ The danger of false beliefs is twofold. First there is a danger in believing a lie. If we have a false belief in our belief system, and we know that we act on what we believe, then how will we act if the belief is wrong?
- ▶ In the Bible, Saul became jealous and thought that David was out to kill him and he acted accordingly – with suspicion that lead to the point that he tried to kill David by throwing a spear at him while he sat at the dinner table. Saul's false belief led to murderous actions. (1 Samuel 18:9-12).

Pulling Down Strongholds

- ▶ Secondly there is a danger that we will think that we believe something, but in reality we do not believe it and therefore do not act on it.
- ▶ This happens when we mentally assent to something accepting in our minds that it is true, but we really do not embrace this belief with true faith, and as a result, we do not act on what we claim we believe.
- ▶ This would be exemplified in the life of a person who believed that a bear was coming to eat them and just sat there. It makes no sense to think that your life is in danger and not try to fight or flee. And yet when it comes to doctrine, people claim to believe sound doctrine and may not even understand that doctrine at all, and so they think they believe the truth but it does not affect the way they live.

Pulling Down Strongholds

- ▶ And the real, eternal danger here is that we either believe a lie (false doctrine) or we think we are trusting Christ when we really are not. If we believe a lie, we are doomed, for only the truth makes us free. And if we think we believe the truth but do not actually believe it, then we are self-deceived and are in danger of hearing those most awful words in Scripture, “Depart from Me, I never knew you.” (Matthew 7:21-23).
- ▶ Remember the Parable of the Soils? Those two soils that embraced the Word quickly but then died without bearing fruit – the shallow soil where the seed had no root and the thorny soil where the cares of this world choked the plant – they represent people who emotionally or mentally embrace the preaching of the gospel but do not actually have faith. They do not really believe what they have heard. The proof? They never bear fruit, and they wither and die with no root, being choked out by the love of this world. If they had had true faith, they would have borne fruit (good works). Their faith would have worked.

Pulling Down Strongholds

- ▶ In order to understand faith then, we must strive to believe what God tells us, to rightly inform our belief system. We must be sure that what we claim to believe affects the way we live. In the Scriptures this is the idea that a good tree bears good fruit. If we have faith in Jesus Christ, we will bear good fruit. If we do not bear good fruit, then we need to examine what we really believe. We may just be believing in ourselves and thinking that that is the same as faith in Christ.
- ▶ Saving faith, faith that is alive, faith that produces spiritual fruit, faith that is active, faith that is real, is faith in the Word of God and in God Himself. Saving faith has no room for self, for pride, for licentiousness, or for sin. Saving faith is a gift from God. It is trust in Christ. It is proof of what we cannot see and the reality behind that for which we hope.

Pulling Down Strongholds

- ▶ False beliefs that are fortified and defended become strongholds. It becomes ingrained in our thinking and we cannot accept the truth as being true because we have so believed a lie.
- ▶ Part of the problem today is that false beliefs that are becoming strongholds affect more than just individuals, but all of society.
- ▶ These false beliefs are so rooted in the thinking and feeling of the population that people will defend their views militantly and even seem to act in a religious fervor to protect the “doctrine” that they espouse.
- ▶ No amount of facts or evidence seems to persuade one to reject a false belief that has become so much a part of the person who holds it that it would be an act of absolute self-denial to adopt a change in thinking.

Pulling Down Strongholds

- ▶ It has long been understood throughout history that with the right circumstances people can be forced to believe a lie and then believe that they accepted this belief willingly. “Brain washing” is spiritual in nature. It is substituting lies for the truth.
- ▶ “Coercive Persuasion, a systematic effort to persuade nonbelievers to accept a certain allegiance, command, or doctrine. By controlling the physical and social environment, an attempt is made to destroy loyalties to any unfavourable groups or individuals, to demonstrate to the individual that his attitudes and patterns of thinking are incorrect and must be changed, and to develop loyalty and unquestioning obedience to the ruling party. The term is most appropriately used in reference to a program of political or religious indoctrination or ideological remolding.” – *Encyclopedia Britannica*

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- ▶ “The techniques of brainwashing typically involve isolation from former associates and sources of information; an exacting regimen requiring absolute obedience and humility; strong social pressures and rewards for cooperation; physical and psychological punishments for non-cooperation ranging from social ostracism and criticism, deprivation of food, sleep, and social contacts, to bondage and torture; and continual reinforcement.” – *Encyclopedia Britannica*
- ▶ Mass Mental Illness: When an entire society embraces the same false belief. This is accomplished by manipulating circumstances that result in 1) Prolonged Isolation, 2) Withdrawal from ordinary activities that lead to feelings of uselessness, 3) Constant anxiety and fear, and 4) A single, unquestionable solution offered by an authority, no matter how ludicrous. This also has been proven to lead to high levels of aggression for no reason. Everyone is on edge from the constant fear and stress.

Pulling Down Strongholds

- ▶ Spiritual warfare then is the use of the truth of the Word of God for the tearing down of strongholds of false beliefs that have infiltrated and influenced us. It is a battle for the mind to be ruled by truth.
- ▶ Isaiah 5:20 Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! 21 Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, And prudent in their own sight!
- ▶ 2 Corinthians 10:4 For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, 5 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, 6 and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.

Next Week

- ▶ Lesson 2: Delusions and Unrighteous Deception