

Bridal Revelation and Spiritual Warfare (2 Cor. 10-11)

I. WE MUST PULL DOWN SPIRITUAL STRONGHOLDS

A. Paul gave us insight into how we can pull down spiritual strongholds in our life.

⁴For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but 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 [firm agreement] to the obedience of Christ. (2 Cor. 10:4-5)

B. ***Stronghold***: A stronghold was a fortified structure that surrounded a city. It was referred to as a fort or fortified city and often included a large stone wall around it. Some of these walls were as high as 50 feet and were 10 feet thick. Their purpose was to keep an invading army out of the city.

1. Paul used the analogy of a stronghold, or fortress, to teach a spiritual truth describing how Satan attacks us and how we can overcome them. He used a positive word picture of a stronghold (a wall of stone) *protecting a city from an invasion* to illustrate the negative way in which Satan seeks to hold people in bondage instead of being invaded by God's presence.

2. Satan seeks to establish strongholds in our mind to keep God's presence from invading our life with blessing. He seeks to establish "stone walls of accusations" in our mind against God to keep His liberating presence from invading our life and freeing our heart.

C. ***Casting down arguments***: We are to reject Satan's lies against Jesus and His leadership.

D. Jesus spoke of binding Satan to invade his domain and liberate "his goods" from his prison house. Satan's "goods" include lives that he holds captive behind his demonic strongholds or prisons. Satan, the strong man, "protects" his goods from being plundered by Jesus and God's kingdom.

²⁸"But 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 [Satan's] and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house." (Mt. 12:28-29)

II. DIFFERENT TYPES OF STRONGHOLDS

A. ***Personal strongholds***: Strongholds in our mind are a *collection of ideas* that are in agreement with Satan. They are lies that accuse Jesus; they are arguments, or lies, about His character, power, and wisdom. When we believe lies about Him, then we believe lies about who we are in Christ.

B. ***Cultural strongholds***: Cultural strongholds consist of actions, values, and laws in a specific region that are in agreement with Satan. Some cities are known for specific sins, such as prostitution, drugs, racism, organized crime, gambling, false religion, poverty, human trafficking, violence, gangs, anti-God intellectualism, kidnapping, etc. Repentance for these along with intercession for God's mercy and acting in the opposite spirit are necessary 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; cf. Dan. 10:12, 20-21).

III. SPIRITUAL STRONGHOLDS ARE ESTABLISHED BY AGREEING WITH DARKNESS

- A. Strongholds are established by opening doors to Satan through sinful actions and belief systems. His sphere of activity is the domain of darkness. Wherever there is darkness, he has legal access.
- ¹³For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son. (Col. 1:13, NASB)*
1. If darkness is in our hearts, then he has legal access to us in that part of our life.
 2. Jesus had no darkness in His life. Thus, Satan had no legal access points into Jesus' life.
- ³⁰“For the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me.” (Jn. 14:30)*
- B. 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*. Sin that is not rejected continues to increase in people until it is full-grown (Jas. 1:15).
- ¹⁴Each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires...¹⁵When desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. (Jas. 1:14-15)*
- C. Augustine said, “Lust yielded to becomes a habit, and a habit not resisted becomes a necessity.”
- D. Satan sends “flaming arrows”—a heightened sense of lust, fear, oppression, or anxiety, etc. We are able to resist and extinguish these demonic influences by the authority of Jesus' name as we declare the truth of God's Word and commit to obey Jesus in that area of our life that Satan is attacking.
- ¹⁶You will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. (Eph. 6:16, NASB)*
- ⁷Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. (Jas. 4:7)*

IV. PULLING DOWN STRONGHOLDS OF THE MIND

- A. We have spiritual weapons that are mighty and able to pull down strongholds (2 Cor. 10:4-5).
- ⁴The weapons of our warfare are not carnal but 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*** (NKJV, KJV)—demolishing (NIV), destroying fortresses (NASB)
Casting down arguments (NKJV)—destroying speculations (NASB), imaginations (KJV)
- C. ***Every high thing***: This speaks of demonic activities and lies that are like a high, powerful wall that hinders God's blessing in our lives. Demonic powers exalt themselves by seducing us to believe their lies which attack the truth about God and who we are in Christ.
- D. We must pull down—cast down, or dismantle—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 leadership 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 lie by lie about Jesus.

- E. We cast down lies by bringing our thoughts into captivity to God, or into agreement with His Word.
- F. We use three ways to cast down arguments against God in our life. We begin to dismantle personal strongholds with right thinking aligned with the truth of God's Word. Renewing our mind by the Word soon leads to emotional change, which in time results in the transformation of our behavior.

²***But be transformed [emotions] by the renewing of your mind. (Rom. 12:2)***

1. ***Expose:*** We identify and expose lies by reading or hearing God's Word (Rom. 10:17).
2. ***Renounce:*** We renounce our agreement with lies and resist Satan's arrows (Eph. 6:16).
3. ***Replace:*** We replace the wrong thoughts by speaking God's word over our life (Mt. 4:4).

⁴***But He [Jesus] answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'" (Mt. 4:4)***

³²***"And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (Jn. 8:32)***

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

- A. Paul called us to engage in spiritual warfare (2 Cor. 10:3-5) and then taught us *how* to engage in it (2 Cor. 11:2-4). He emphasized two truths that are foundational to disarming personal strongholds.
- B. Paul taught on overcoming strongholds by engaging with truths related to being the Bride of Christ. He taught that we are *betrothed* to Jesus and that He made us to be as a *chaste virgin* before Him.

²***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)***

- C. ***Betrothed to one husband:*** He chose us as His eternal partner and betrothed Himself to us (at the cross). He made binding commitments to give His heart to us forever. He has deep emotions for us, delights in relating to us, and is committed to sharing His heart, throne, and beauty with us.
 1. Hosea prophesied that the Lord would betroth His people to Him (Hos. 2:19-20).

¹⁹***"I will betroth you to Me forever; yes, I will betroth you to Me." (Hos. 2:19)***
 2. In the ancient world, a couple was legally married on the day they were betrothed.
 3. We were betrothed, or "engaged," to Jesus on the day we were born again. The consummation of the marriage will be in the age to come (Rev. 19:7-9).

- D. ***Chaste virgin:*** We stand as a chaste, pure virgin in God's sight by receiving the free gift of Jesus' righteousness when we were born again. We are declared as righteous before God as Jesus is. In God's court, everything that legally hindered us from receiving God's affections has been removed.

¹⁷***If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation...²¹He 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)***

- E. These two truths about our betrothal to Jesus redefine our life: we see His desire for relationship with us and see ourselves as a chaste virgin before Him. These truths disarm emotions like fear of rejection, shame, and despair. Sin is energized by despair. If you feel clean, you'll live clean.
- F. We must not define ourselves by our struggles, but by Jesus' work on the cross and His desire for us. When we feel shame, we live shamefully. When we see our dignity in God, we live with dignity.
- G. ***Our core spiritual identity***: Are we slaves to sin who struggle to love God? Or are we lovers of God who struggle with sin? When our love for Jesus is weak, it is still real. Weak love is not false love.
- H. The devil wants us to confuse our weakness with rebellion so that we give up in despair. Many mistake their spiritual immaturity for rebellion and thus feel like a hopeless hypocrite.

VI. DECEIVED BY FALSE TEACHINGS

- A. Paul called the Corinthians to embrace the true gospel and to reject all distortions of it.

³I fear, lest...as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted [led astray, NASB] 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. 11:2-4)
- B. ***Deceived by craftiness***: As Satan deceived Eve with craftiness, so false teachers (the Judaizers) had deceived them with lies about Jesus and the gospel. Satan's goal is for us to leave the simplicity of being received by Jesus and forget that He desires us and freely gave us His righteousness.
- C. ***Another Jesus***: Judaizers believed that Jesus was the Messiah, but not that He offers the free gift of righteousness by faith; nor did they see Him as the Bridegroom God who desires relationship with His people. When we believe lies about Jesus, we believe lies about who we are in Christ.
- D. ***Another gospel***: The true gospel is based on God's free gift and deep desire for us. The false gospel that they embraced deceived them into believing they must earn God's favor and salvation.
- E. ***A different spirit***: They operated in a spirit of condemnation, fear, and bondage. The spirit of bondage never empowers our heart in love nor imparts the power to love and obey Jesus.

¹There is...no condemnation to those who are in Christ...¹⁵For you did not receive the spirit of bondage to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father."
(Rom. 8:1, 15)
- F. ***Summary***: Paul declared that God's Word could dismantle spiritual strongholds in their lives so they could cast down lies (stones of accusation) against Jesus and against who they were in Christ.
- G. Paul did this by declaring to them that they were *betrothed to Jesus* and thus desired by God, and that they stood *clean before God as virgins*. Therefore, as we confess and declare that Jesus desires us and that we are the righteousness of God, we dismantle strongholds of darkness in our lives.