

Breaking Down Strongholds that Hinder our Service

“For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare *are* not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ…”

(2 Corinthians 10:3-5: *English Standard Version*)

Lesson Aim:

We must wear the proper armor and apply the appropriate weapons in spiritual warfare so that spiritual strongholds will be destroyed and our service in the body of Christ will not be hindered.

**Back ground for 2nd Corinthians**

The city of Corinth was a sinful city, but it was fertile ground for the seed of the Gospel.

* The Apostle Paul came to the city of Corinth on his 2nd Missionary Journey.
* After establishing the Corinthian church, Paul soon discovered that the church was facing some serious issues. The church of Corinth included Jews, but it was largely composed of new converted Gentiles which created social divisions.
* Not only did they face social issues, but they suffered with issues regarding sexual immorality.
* Another issue was there were Christians arguing amongst each other in the church.
	+ Arguments led to division, and division soon led into cliques.
	+ The ring leaders were the false teachers who crept into the Corinthian church.
	+ These false teachers started spreading gossip about the Apostle Paul, in hopes to discredit Paul’s character.
	+ One of the reasons why Paul wrote this letter was to defend the authenticity of his divinely assigned apostleship and his sincere devotion to spreading the good news of the Gospel.
	+ While Paul was in Macedonia, anticipating his third visit to Corinth, he sent this letter ahead before his arrival to prepare the Corinthians for his “**State of the Union Address**”.
	+ Paul wanted to take the believer’s mind OFF the gossip and refocus their minds back on the Gospel.

It is a known fact that a true believer who strives to live a Spirit-controlled life will be faced with some type of spiritual stronghold. **What is a stronghold?**  A stronghold is an area of darkness in our mind or personality that cause ongoing spiritual weakness and behavioral problems.

EXAMPLE: If a person feels guilty and shameful of their past and they continually think about their past, they will soon begin to feel like a failure. Eventually, they will feel too unworthy to have a close relationship with God. This type of mindset will affect their spiritual growth, their faith and their relationship with Christ. That’s an example of how satan builds spiritual strongholds in our mind.

The oldest trick in the **book of the enemy** is that he will constantly remind us of our past. He will bring up things that God has already forgiven us for and try to make us agree with him on how bad we failed God. If you think you are hopeless, you will feel hopeless. IF you constantly think of your past failures, you will act like a failure.

Strongholds are built upon lies we have accepted that are tagged onto us by satan. The best way and the most effective way to counteract a lie and break free from spiritual strongholds is to apply the truth of God’s Word in the place of satan’s lie. This process is known as “engaging in spiritual warfare.” **What is Spiritual Warfare?** Spiritual Warfare is conflict being waged in the invisible, spiritual realm that is being manifest in the visible physical realm. (Tony Evans).

Anytime you step up and serve in the body of Christ, you better get ready to engage in spiritual warfare. The work of the ministry is **spiritual warfare** with **spiritual enemies** for a **spiritual purpose!** The most powerful and effective weapon against spiritual warfare is the divine power that comes forth through the doctrine of the Gospel.

IF we are going to be effective in breaking down strongholds so that our service will not be hindered, we need to make sure we use the appropriate weapon and wear the correct armor in spiritual warfare.

In 2 Corinthians 10: 3-5 Paul talked about the Weapon of Spiritual Warfare but in Ephesians 6:10-18, Paul talked about the Armor for Spiritual Warfare.

1. The Weapons for Spiritual Warfare:
2. **How to Fight in Spiritual Warfare:**

**“For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh.” (2 Cor. 10:3)**

For though we live in the world, we are not carrying on a worldly war.

Paul acknowledges that, physically, he walks in the flesh just like any other man.

Paul also said, that even though he’s a man, he doesn’t wage ware in the flesh.

Why? because you can’t fight a spiritual battle with fleshy weapons.

That’s like taking a knife to a gun fight.

To wage war according to the flesh means to carry out ministry with human resources without any divine power and the result would be noneffective in the building of God’s Kingdom.

1. **The Power of the Weapons in Spiritual Warfare: (the Gospel; faith, hope, prayer)**

 “**For the weapons of our warfare *are* not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds”(2 Cor. 10:4)**

* “destroy strongholds” (pulling down strongholds)
* Power to totally wipe out, tear down, uproot.

Paul understood that God equipped him with divine power so that he would be able preach the Gospel conviction and clarity so that spiritual strongholds would be broken, and folks would be set free. (2 Corinth. 4:7-18).

1. **The Purpose of the Weapons in Spiritual Warfare:**

“We **destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ.**”(2 Cor. 10:5)

* One of Satan’s tactics is to keep a believer ignorant of God’s Word and God’s will.
* When there is a lack of knowledge of God’s Word, there is a lack of faith in God’s ability. When faith is lacking obedience is slacking.

Although we are born again and sincere in our faith, we can still have ongoing struggles with thoughts, emotions and habits that wage war against our relationship with Christ.

* Remember that when God called you, He equipped you.
* When God commissioned you to become His disciple, he equipped you with spiritual weapons that have divine power.
* These divine weapons are able to cast out every imagination that is contrary to the Word of God, for the purpose of bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. As believers, we must submit our thoughts to Christ and bring them into conformity with God’s will.
1. The Armor for Spiritual Warfare:



Satan’s goal is to distract and discourage God’s children. His resume is to “kill, steal and destroy” the people that are very dear to God’s heart.

* When you are in a battle, you need a weapon to destroy the enemy, but you also need to wear the appropriate armor to protect yourself from the enemy.
* Such is the same when you are in faced with spiritual warfare.

In Ephesians 6:10-18, Paul gave the believers in Ephesus clear instructions on the appropriate armor to wear in the spiritual warfare.

1. **You MUST know your enemy: Eph.6:12**

**“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.”**

* It’s not your husband, your children or your co-workers.
* It is the enemy, the devil.
* The battle is not physically based, but it’s spiritually based.
* You must know your opponent in the battle so you will recognize his tactics and strategies.
1. **You MUST put on the armor: Eph.6:13**

 “Therefore, take up the whole armor of God that you may be able to withstand the in the evil day and having done all, to stand firm.”

* Paul put emphasis on “whole armor of God”.
* You can’t go into a battle with just part of the armor, but you got to have on all the armor.
* Read Acts 19:11-16 “…then the man in who the evil spirit was leaped on them, overpowered them and prevailed against them so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.”
1. **You MUST Gird Yourself with the belt of Truth. Eph.6:14a**

 “Stand, therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth; “*gird your waist with truth*”

* Belt of the armor held everything together on the Roman solder.
* Not only did it hold everything together, but the belt was also instrumental in tucking away loose clothing that could cause the solder to trip or fall.
* Now days, we see folks walking around with their paints sagging to their knees. They try to walk wide legged to keep the pants from falling off.
* Truth of God’s word holds everything else together in our daily walk in Christ.
* The truth of God’s word tucks away those things that cause us to trip up.
* The truth of God’s word will extinguish the lies that the devil is telling you.
* That’s why it’s important for us to meditate on things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, things that are praiseworthy (Philp. 4:8).
* We must fill our mind with truth of God’s word so that we can pull down the strongholds that the enemy have hooked into our mind. Only the truth of God’s word can tear them down.
1. **You MUST put on the breast plate of righteousness: Eph.6:14b**

 “and having put on the breastplate of righteousness”

The breast plate was the protection for the Roman soldier’s the heart.

It was made of strong heavy iron. It took a mighty strong arrow to penetrate the metal.

If the soldier got wounded in the leg or arm, he probably could sustain the wound.

But if he got shot in the heart, it could be a quick death.

The heart is the depository for all wisdom and the source of whatever affects our speech.

The heart is commonly referring to the mind as the center of our thinking and reasoning, but also includes the emotions, the will and the inner being.

The word of God says, **Proverbs** ***4:23 “Keep your heart with all diligence for out of it springs the issues of life.”***

**Proverbs** says, “***as a man thinketh, so is he.”***

Satan will accuse you and make you think you are not what God made you to be.

But God declared you righteous at the minute you confessed your faith in Jesus and the work of salvation that He completed on the Cross.

It’s important for you put on your **breastplate of righteousness** so that when the adversary, start reminding you of your past; you can boldly declare that you are a recipient of the righteousness of Christ. And then you can remind him of his future destination.

1. **You MUST put on your “Gospel of Peace” shoes: Eph.6:15**

 **“..and , as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness of the gospel of peace,”**

* The Roman soldier’s boots were made with nails to grip the ground in combat.
* They were confident in knowing that they wouldn’t slip while fighting their opponent.
* The Gospel of Peace is the good news that through Christ, we are at peace with God.
* Just like the Roman solider have confidence in knowing that he can stand ‘sure-footed” in battle, we can also have the same confidence and stand “sure-footed” in the spiritual battle because we know beyond the shadow of doubt that we have peace with God and knowing that God is our strength.
1. **You MUST take the shield of faith: Eph.6:16**

 **“In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one;”**

* The shield protected the entire body of the Roman soldier.
* Without the shield, the soldier would not be protected from the arrows of his opponent.
* In the spiritual warfare, Paul describes “faith” as a “shield”.
* Faith is trusting in God.
* It’s believing and acting on the truth of God’s Word.
* When you take the shield of faith in the battle with you, you will act on the truth that you believe about God. Taking the shield of faith calls for obedience to the Word of God.

When you are engaged in spiritual warfare, you have to let your faith work for you.

* Learn to live like you believe what the Word of God says about you.
* Don’t just say you believe that you are the “head and not the tail”. Live like it.
* The word of God says you are the righteousness of God through Christ Jesus. Live like it.
* To overcome spiritual strongholds, there must be faith-applied action in your daily walk. The word of God has to be applied in your walk so that there will be a transformation.
1. **You MUST take the helmet of salvation: Eph. 6:17a**

 **“..and take the helmet of salvation..”**

* The head is a major target in the battle.
* Satan’s tactic is to destroy a believer’s assurance of salvation.
* But because of the precious blood of Christ, and your confession of faith in Christ, your salvation is eternally secure. *1 Peter 3:18 “For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit…”* You must hold to the truth that you a child of God, you are eternally secure in your salvation.
1. **You MUST take the sword of the Spirit: Eph.6:17b**

 “…and the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God....”

Notice that the sword is the only weapon that the soldier has in the battle.

In the spiritual battle, the sword of the Spirit is the Word of God.

God’s word is more powerful than any of satan’s attacks.

The Word of God can be used to defend yourself from satan’s attacks as well as destroy satan’s strategies.

1. **You MUST pray Always: Eph. 6:18**

“praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints.”

* Prayer is an intimate communication with God.
* It’s two-way communication where you share your heart with God and God share’s His heart with you.
* Prayer allows God in the secrete places of your life.
* Prayer is essential for every believer.
* When you are faced with a spiritual battle, in order to survive, not only do you need the protection of the full armor, but you also need the connection with the Holy God.
* Paul says pray always and be watchful with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.

In Ephesians 6: Paul told the believers, when they are faced with spiritual warfare, to be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

The key words that are significant in Ephesians 6:

“**Put on the whole armor of God..”** (Eph.6:11) and then “**STAND, therefore**..”(Ephs.6:14).

 This let’s us know that we don’t have to rush in and attack the enemy in the battle. When we are faced with spiritual warfare, all we have to do is put on the armor of God and stand firm! It’s a fixed fight.

Our spiritual battle is a fixed fight.

* The same power Jesus had over the enemy is the same power and authority we have over the enemy.
* Satan’s power over the believer has already been broken and the war is already won through Christ Jesus.
* When you know that God has already equipped you with the power to win, you can face your opponent with confidence in knowing that it’s a fixed fight.
* You are victorious.
* We will not be victorious in our spiritual battle if we try to fight it in the flesh.
* We cannot overcome strongholds by ourselves if we try to fight in the flesh.
* We were not designed to do this by ourselves.
* The Lord has given us divine power to overcome strongholds and become victorious in the spiritual battle so that our service in the body of Christ will not be hindered.