

INTRODUCTION

We have finished the two chapters where Paul writes about receiving an offering for the poor Christians in Jerusalem. In his first letter, Paul had chided the Corinthians for being immature Christians who could only receive doctrinal milk instead of meat. Beginning here in chapter 10, Paul serves up a heaping platter of spiritual meat as he addresses spiritual warfare. In this message I want to talk about how “Satan Flees God’s WMDs.” In this world of international politics, WMD stands for Weapons of Mass Destruction. But the WMDs I want to talk about today has nothing to do with Weapons of Mass Destruction. For our purpose today WMD stands for *Weapons of Mighty Demolition*, because this passage of scripture says God’s weapons are mighty for the demolishing of strongholds.

There’s a possibility many of you have never heard of the concept of “spiritual strongholds,” so it will be new to you. This truth isn’t spiritual milquetoast, it’s definitely Bible brisket, so to prevent a spiritual tummy ache, make sure you chew on this truth thoroughly before you swallow it!

2 Corinthians 10:1-6. “By the meekness and gentleness of Christ, I appeal to you—I, Paul, who am ‘timid’ when face to face with you, but ‘bold’ when away! I beg you that when I come I may not have to be as bold as I expect to be toward some people who think that we live by the standards of this world. For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. And we will be ready to punish every act of disobedience, once your obedience is complete.

This is such a deep subject that I’m only going to be able to introduce it to you in this message. I usually do not push my CDs, but a few years ago I did four sessions on “Demolishing Strongholds” for our Women’s Ministry. If you want to learn more about this subject on how you can be set free, then I’d encourage you to order these CDs through our online store at www.gabc.org.

We sing a lot about “Victory in Jesus” but many people don’t even know that there’s a battle going on, and if they do, they’re not even sure where the battle is taking place. If you want to have Victory in Jesus there are three things you have to do in regard to Spiritual Strongholds:

1. DEFINE STRONGHOLDS

The word translated “stronghold” in verse 4 is a word that means a “fortress” or an “outpost.” We might think of it as an ancient castle or fortress. But Paul is only using it as a metaphor to teach us an important truth about spiritual warfare. Let’s define it for our purposes.

(1) A STRONGHOLD is an illegal outpost which the enemy (Satan) has established from which he repeatedly attacks a person at his/her point of weakness

If you are a Christian, then your life has been occupied by Jesus. But there is a possibility that the enemy has slipped in and constructed a fortress in your mind from which he repeatedly tempts you and attacks you. Don’t forget, Satan is only a fallen angel, and he can only be in one place at a time. He’s not omnipresent like God. But Satan has an organized, mobilized, demonized army who carry out his devilish strategy. Jesus revealed the enemy’s strategy in John 10:10, “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy.” Satan and his demons have targeted you to kill your joy, steal your blessings, and destroy your effectiveness.

(2) Strongholds are patterns of faulty thinking that become entrenched in the mind

We know the mind is the battlefield, because verse 5 speaks of “arguments and pretensions that set themselves up against the knowledge of God.” And verse 6 says we must “take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”

There are all kinds of strongholds, both personal and societal. Racism is a social stronghold. It’s based on the sinful, faulty argument that there are some races superior to others. Many Christians have even embraced the false pretension of racism which God’s Word clearly denies.

Belief in astrology is another example of what may be a personal or social stronghold. I’ll bet more people in this room could tell me their astrological sign than could tell me how many books there are in the New Testament. If you think the locations of the stars and planets have something to do with your life, that’s a faulty thought process Satan has built in your mind.

In America we have a 24/7 onslaught of false morality. Television, movies, and the internet are trying to get you to believe that any kind of sexual behavior is acceptable as long as nobody is hurt. They are also telling you if you believe marriage is between a husband and a wife and sex should only be shared between a husband and wife, then you’re old fashioned and behind the times. There are social strongholds all around us. But mainly, we want to talk about personal spiritual strongholds. So in order to deal with them, the next thing you must do is:

2. IDENTIFY YOUR STRONGHOLDS

There are so many different strongholds that there is no way I can mention most of them. However, if you’re still a little confused about what might be a possible stronghold in your life, let me give you a list of possible spiritual strongholds from A-Z. There’s Anger; Bitterness; Compulsive behavior; Despair; Eating disorders; Fear; Greed; Hypocrisy; Impatience; a Judgmental spirit; Keeping grudges; Legalism; Materialism; Need for approval; Obsessive behavior; Pornography; a Quarrelsome spirit; Revenge; Self-pity; Temper issues; an Unforgiving spirit; a Violent nature; Worry, Xenophobia (that’s fear of strangers, but any phobia can be a stronghold.); Yoga (the spiritual side); and Zeal that is misplaced.

That list isn’t exhaustive. There are as many possible stronghold as the wicked creativity of Satan can devise. If you are honest with yourself, you’ll admit there is an area in your life in which you seem to fail over and over. Your desire to live right is there, but it seems as if someone evil is perched on a high wall and like a sniper, he keeps taking pot shots at you when it comes to those areas. If there is some weakness, or recurring sin in your life, you should consider

the possibility that it is a spiritual stronghold. But coming to the realization that it is there is *good*, because only when you identify your target can you prepare to do battle against it! In this process of identifying your strongholds there are three things to do:

(1) Gather intelligence about the stronghold

If you attend a military academy, you will take classes on the importance of gathering information or intelligence about your enemy *before* you launch an attack. It’s extremely dangerous to attack an enemy you know absolutely nothing about. The same is true of spiritual strongholds. Once you identify your stronghold, then start the process of learning everything you can about it.

If your stronghold is abusing your body by cutting yourself, there is a great deal of helpful literature both on the internet and in print to help you understand some of the reasons **WHY** you hurt yourself. If you are hooked on pornography, there is some great information you can study that will help you learn how you can deal with it. If you are struggling with alcohol or any other kind of drug addiction, you’re not the first to fight this stronghold. So admit your problem, and learn as much about it as you can.

(2) Cut off the supply lines to the stronghold

In ancient times, whenever an attacking army approached a fortress, the best way to conquer it was to simply lay siege to it and cut off the supply roads. The attacking army wouldn’t allow food or water to be carried into the city, and soon the starving soldiers were forced to surrender.

Once you identify your strongholds, there are some practical things you can do to starve out your enemy. God says in 2 Timothy 2:22, “Flee evil desires!” That means sometimes the best thing to do is to run away from temptation. Romans 13:14 says, “Do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.” That simply means stay away from people and places where it’s easier to fall into sin. If your stronghold is alcohol addiction, obviously this means you shouldn’t hang out in places where everybody else is drinking! If your stronghold is internet pornography, install some filters or accountability software on your computer. That’s how you can cut off the supply lines to your stronghold.

One of the earliest rock songs that promoted drug abuse was in the ’60s when Grace Slick and the Jefferson Airplane recorded a song entitled “White Rabbit.” The lyrics say, “One pill makes you larger; and one pill makes you small; and one that mother gives you doesn’t do anything at all.” The song ended with a psychedelic chorus that kept repeating, “Feed your head. Feed your head.” And Grace wasn’t talking about feeding your mind with education, she was talking about drugs. What a terrible message! That’s the message that our culture is still giving: Feed your habits! But if you want to live a life of victory, *don’t* feed your habit—starve them! Cut off the supply lines to your strongholds!

(3) Enlist a group of fellow warriors

Whoever heard of going against a castle alone? King David had his mighty men, King Arthur

had his knights, and even Prince Caspian had some help! The most important thing I can tell you about demolishing strongholds is, “Don’t try to do it by yourself!” The best place to find some fellow soldiers is right here in your family of faith. There are brothers and sisters here who are ready to stand by you and help you demolish strongholds.

That’s one of the great things about Celebrate Recovery. Every Monday night several hundred people gather who are fighting against hurts, habits, and hang-ups—just another way to describe strongholds. But they come together to help each other. That’s why we have support groups for people who struggle with chemical addictions, pornography, homosexual urges, anger issues, eating issues ... and the list goes on. I’m proud of everyone who has the guts to come to CR and say, “I’ve got problems, and I can’t whip these problems alone. I need God, and I need other strugglers to help me.”

For men who struggle with the awful stronghold of pornography, there’s help for you when you find another guy who can be an accountability partner. I’ve mentioned before that one of the best resources to fight against pornography is “Triple X Church.” I know men who have installed the triple x church’s X3watch software on their computer and every week it sends a report of the websites they access to a trusted friend of their choice to keep them accountable. Ladies and gentlemen, if you’re struggling with a stronghold, don’t try to attack it alone!

3. ATTACK STRONGHOLDS WITH GOD’S WEAPONS

Once you’ve defined strongholds and identified them, then you’re ready to attack. Paul writes that the weapons we fight with are mighty unto God for the demolishing of strongholds. That’s why I call them God’s WMDs. They are Weapons of Mighty Demolition. Before a soldier goes into battle, he must become so familiar with his weapons that he can disassemble and reassemble his rifle in the dark. Let’s review the weapons we have at our disposal.

(1) PROTECTIVE WEAPONS: The armor of God

In Ephesians 6, the Bible tells us it is important to put on the whole armor of God. Of the six parts of the armor mentioned, five of them are defensive, or protective. First, we put on the belt of truth. A soldier’s belt is the part that holds a variety of other important weapons and gear. You must also put on the breastplate of righteousness—in today’s terms that would be like a Kevlar bullet-proof vest. It is our righteousness in Jesus that protects and covers our heart. Next we put on the battle boots of the readiness to carry the gospel of peace to every person in every place. Then you take up the shield of faith to deflect all the fiery attacks of the enemy. Finally, we put on the helmet of salvation—that’s to protect our mind from the enemy’s attack. But in ancient times, helmets also identified an army, so our helmet also identifies us as soldiers of Jesus. But we’re not just talking about defending ourselves, we’re talking about attacking, so we need to learn about our:

(2) OFFENSIVE WEAPONS

a. Spirit-inspired Word of God

In this passage of scripture, Paul mentions weapons (plural), so we aren’t limited to just one weapon—there are many. But I want to mention the two most powerful WMDs (weapons of mighty demolition). First, there is the Spirit-inspired Word of God. In Ephesians 6, the only offensive weapon is the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. There are two different words that are used to describe the Word of God in the New Testament. One is *logos*, which means the written word of God. The other is *rhema*, which means the living, applied word of God. Using the sword analogy, the *logos* is like a sword in its scabbard, and the *rhema* is the sword drawn and slashing through the enemy.

b. Spirit-empowered prayer

Our second offensive weapon is Spirit-empowered prayer. This is really how you thrust the sword. In Ephesians 6, after we get dressed for battle, then the Bible says, “And pray in the Spirit.” In other words, prayer is the attack itself. Most mature Christians have learned the greatest battles in life are fought and won in prayer.

The actual word used in verse 4 to describe the power of our weapons is *dunamis*, from which we get our word dynamite. When you understand the power of using these two weapons together you have discovered God’s secret weapon and you can link together the Word and Prayer (like two sticks of dynamite) and then light the fuse of faith! If you were going to demolish a building, you wouldn’t use sticks and stones; you’d place dynamite at strategic points and then detonate them. The way to demolish Satan’s strongholds is by using the combined explosive power of the Word and Prayer.

Even before I learned anything about pulling down spiritual strongholds I discovered the power of praying God’s Word. Over 30 years ago when I finished seminary in Louisville, Kentucky we both had full-time jobs. The first church that called me as pastor in central Alabama paid us a whopping \$14,000 a year, which was much less than we were making in our two jobs. But I was so thrilled to serve a church, I would have done it for nothing. That first year, Jenni was born, so we were a growing family. God blessed our church and it grew dramatically. When time rolled around for a new church budget, the Finance Committee proposed to give me a raise of \$100 a month. So when we mailed the one page proposed budget to the members, the line beside Pastor’s salary jumped from \$14,000 to \$15,200.

I’ll never forget the afternoon when a man in the church who owned a local barbershop came storming into my office with that budget clutched in his fist. His face was red as he said, “This is outrageous! I’ve been cutting hair for 20 years and haven’t gotten a raise. I don’t think you’re worth what we’re paying you now, so I’m going to vote against this budget and I’m going to talk to everyone who comes into my barbershop and tell them to vote against it.” I was so stunned I couldn’t even respond before he turned and stomped out. I won’t tell you the man’s name, and I really don’t want to reflect poorly on his character, because he was a good man who just lost his temper, and we later became good friends.

I wasn’t as concerned about the salary as I was maintaining unity, because the church had a reputation for fighting and fussing, and I didn’t want to be the cause of more fussing. As a wet-behind-the-ears pastor I didn’t know what to do, so I went into my prayer closet, which was a

storage room adjoining my office, where I had placed a kneeling bench. As I knelt to pray, my Schofield Reference Bible was already open to Isaiah 54. (This was the Bible which is now buried 40 feet directly beneath this pulpit). As I began to pray I just said, “Lord help me.” And I began to read the scripture and prayed what I was reading. Isaiah 54 says, “In righteousness you will be established... You will have nothing to fear. Terror will be far removed; it will not come near you. If anyone does attack you, it will not be my doing; whoever attacks you will surrender to you... no weapon forged against you will prevail, and you will refute every tongue that accuses you. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD,” ...declares the Lord. (Isaiah 54:14-17)

I didn’t know anything then about demolishing strongholds; I just prayed that God would resolve this situation. Well, the barber never got a chance to talk to anyone that day, because that evening he suffered a minor stroke. When I was called to the hospital the next morning, I learned the stroke mainly affected his face so he couldn’t talk. As I visited with him and his wife, of course I didn’t say anything about his visit in my office, I just prayed for God to heal him. He didn’t follow through on his plan to lead a charge to vote against the budget, and I’m happy to report he was soon back in his shop cutting hair. We never said anything again about that afternoon, and we became friends who visited for the church together. A few years later, as I was leaving the church, he took me aside and apologized for losing his temper. When I visited that church in 2003 for the dedication of a new building, he was one of the first men to hug my neck.

Now, I’m not saying you should pray for God to hurt those who oppose you, because that’s not what I did. I just want to testify there is tremendous power in praying God’s Word! Sometimes we struggle in our prayers wondering if what we are praying is God’s Will. Well, you don’t have to worry about that when you pray God’s Word. The Bible is filled with prayers and promises, and when you pray them, you never have to wonder if you’re praying according to God’s will, because God’s Word never contradicts God’s will!

(3) THE STRATEGIC MISSION: To liberate thought patterns that have become POWs— and bring them back into obedience to Christ

If there is a stronghold in your life, the only way to know for sure it has been demolished is when you start thinking differently about your sin. You must agree with God that this sin is wrong, instead of trying to justify it.

For instance, if you’re a guy struggling with the stronghold of pornography, you must understand that Satan tries to make you think it’s harmless and that every guy is doing it. He has captured your mind like a prisoner of war. With God’s weapons you can storm that mental fortress and tear it down and recapture those thoughts and make them obedient to Christ.

CONCLUSION

We primarily pray for the strongholds of faulty thinking in our own minds to be demolished, but we must also pray that strongholds in nations, in churches, and in other people be demolished. We see this happening in the story of Jonah. It’s isn’t just a story about a man getting swallowed by a fish. God had told Jonah to go to Nineveh and preach that the people should repent or that

they would be destroyed. Remember, the word “repent” basically means to “change your mind.” Jonah didn’t like the people in Nineveh, so he was okay with God just destroying them, so instead of going to preach to them, he ran in the opposite direction. But of course, God corralled him and finally Jonah went to preach to the city of Nineveh, “Repent! Or else God is going to destroy your city in 40 days.” Do you remember what happened? The Bible says in Jonah 3:5 that the Ninevites believed God and repented. It says “from the greatest [the King] to the least, they put on sackcloth, and repented before God.” They changed the way they thought about their sin and they changed their behavior. God spared them because their stronghold of sin was demolished.

We need to pray long and hard that the people of Tyler, and Texas, and America would repent (change the way of thinking) and turn to God. We should pray that the strongholds of abortion would be demolished. We must beg God to tear down the stronghold of pornography. Pray that the stronghold of sexual perversion would be removed. Pray that the stronghold of materialism, the stronghold of racism, the stronghold of greed, and the stronghold of pride would be abolished.

God never intended the church to be a “sanctuary” where Christians could hide from the big, bad world. Jesus has called us to be Christian soldiers marching as to war, with the cross of Jesus going on before. The Bible says, “Submit yourselves to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” (James 4:7) Jesus said, “Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not overcome it!” (Matthew 16:18)

So, church of Jesus Christ, let’s get ready for the battle! Let’s lock and load, baby! Let’s take the Sword of the Spirit, and let’s pray in the Spirit! Ready? Charge! When we do, we’ll see those strongholds crumble! Because Satan flees God’s WMDs!

OUTLINE

TO HAVE VICTORY IN JESUS YOU MUST:

1. DEFINE STRONGHOLDS

(1) A STRONGHOLD is an illegal outpost which the enemy (Satan) has established from which he repeatedly attacks a person at his/her point of weakness

(2) Strongholds are patterns of faulty thinking that become entrenched in the mind

2. IDENTIFY YOUR STRONGHOLDS

(1) Gather intelligence about the stronghold

(2) Cut off the supply lines to the stronghold

(3) Enlist a group of fellow warriors

3. ATTACK STRONGHOLDS WITH GOD’S WEAPONS

(1) Protective weapons: The armor of God

(2) Offensive weapons:

a. Spirit-inspired Word of God (sword)

b. Spirit-empowered prayer (thrust the sword)

Secret weapon: Link together the Word and Prayer (like two sticks of dynamite) and then light the fuse of faith!

(3) The strategic mission: To liberate thought patterns that have become POWs—and bring them back into obedience to Christ



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To put it in Texas terms, “You’re mighty welcome to use any and all of my ingredients; just make your own chili!”

For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes