

THE BRIDE OF CHRIST

SESSION TWELVE: BREAKING STRONGHOLDS – REVELATION OF THE BRIDE

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³For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. 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 to the obedience of Christ... (2 Cor. 10:3-5)

I. VARIOUS TYPES OF STRONGHOLDS

- A. **Personal (mental) strongholds** – collection of ideas that are in agreement with Satan. These ideas are lies that accuse God and thus ourselves.
- B. **Cultural (society) strongholds** – collection of acts and laws established in the social and legal order within a specific region that are in agreement with Satan and against God’s righteousness.
- C. **Cosmic (geographic) strongholds** – territorial spirits that energize an entire geographic area with influence of the demonic hierarchy (Eph. 6:12; Dan. 10:12, 20-21). Intercession with repentance (corporate solemn assemblies) is God’s way to destroy cosmic strongholds (Joel 2:12-17).

II. UNDERSTANDING STRONGHOLDS

- A. **Natural strongholds** – fortified city with a large stone wall built around it. Some walls were 50 feet high and 10 feet thick. The purpose of these walls was to keep an invading army out. Paul uses a well-known positive word picture to illustrate something negative. In this case, the stone wall is built by Satan and the invading army is the manifest presence of God to plunder all the darkness and pain in our heart. This stronghold or “demonic stone wall” blocks the influences of the manifest presence of God from fully impacting our emotions.
- B. **Personal spiritual stronghold** – collection of distorted ideas about God (a tyranny of lies). These lies cause us to first accuse God and then ourselves and others. They are arguments or negative information about God’s character, power and wisdom. When we believe lies about God then we believe lies about who we are in Christ. We can only know the truth about ourselves as we understand the truth about God.
- C. How are personal strongholds established? They are established by opening the door to Satan through sin and unbelief. Satan’s domain is the domain of darkness. Wherever there is darkness, he has legal access. If the darkness is in our hearts, then he has legal access to us. If darkness fills our heart, we cannot effectively avoid Satan’s torment against us.
- D. Jesus gave him no darkness or access points to His life.

³⁰For the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me. (Jn. 14:30)

III. PULLING DOWN MENTAL STRONGHOLDS

⁴The weapons of our warfare are...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)

- A. ***Pulling down strongholds*** (NKJ, KJV), demolish (NIV), destruction of fortresses (NAS) ***Casting down arguments*** (NKJ) or imaginations (KJV); destroying speculations (NAS) ***Every high thing*** (NKJ); every pretension that sets itself up (NIV), every lofty thing raised up (NAS), every proud obstacle to (RSV), every high thing that exalteth itself against (KJV)
- B. God wants us to destroy and dismantle personal strongholds. Paul instructs us by giving a word picture of a high stone wall that is dismantled stone by stone. In other words, dismantle that stone wall. Pull it down! God's Word is like a hammer that strikes the wall demolishing it stone by stone.
- C. ***Every high thing*** – prominent in our thought life, weighty in impact on our emotions, demonically powerful and/or energetic, and of high importance in God's plan

IV. PULLING DOWN STRONGHOLDS BY CASTING DOWN ARGUMENTS

- A. By casting down the arguments, we dismantle strongholds. Paul used the imagery of a stronghold (fortress), in which every stone that made up the wall is thrown down. We cast the stones of accusation against God down. The Devil seeks to get us to cast stones of complaint against God.
- B. We cast them down (negative) as we bring thoughts into captivity to God (positive). Time in the Word, renewing our minds, is fundamental to this. We *fill our mind with the Word and make it a love slave captive to the truth of God.*
- C. How to cast down arguments (strongholds involved in our mind, emotions, and will)
 1. We expose the lies lodged in our hearts: We fill our mind with truth—thinking right is the key to dismantling personal strongholds. Renewing our minds will lead to emotional change, which results in behavior transformation in time.
 2. We renounce our agreement with those lies: Sin gives demons the permission they need to operate in our lives. Permission is given, resulting in heightened demonic energy. We shut that door by repenting and by renewing our minds. This dismantles demonic activity in our lives.
 3. We resist Satan's heightened energy against us (Jas. 4:7; 1 Pet. 5:9).
⁷Submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. (Jas. 4:7)

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

²For 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. ³But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity [led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ] that is in Christ. (2 Cor. 11:2-3)

- A. ***That I may present you a chaste (pure, clean) virgin*** – This is a legal truth declaring how we stand in God’s court. Legally, we are declared to be a pure virgin by the gift of righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21). This occurred instantly, on the day we were born again. We are pure and clean virgins before God as a free gift (righteousness of God). We are declared as righteous (clean before God) as Jesus is. It is a righteousness that cannot be improved on. In other words, everything that hinders God’s affections towards us and that directs His wrath to us is removed. Every legal hindrance that would keep God from receiving us is removed forever.
- ¹⁷If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new...¹⁹God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them...²¹For He 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)***
- B. ***I have betrothed (engaged; promised, NIV; espoused, KJV) you to one husband (Jesus)*** – You are the one He wants! He longs for you, the burning heart of the uncreated God burns with desire and passion for you. He wants you as His intimate partner forever. He has a holy obsession about you. He laid aside the form of God to purchase you. The Song of Solomon develops this truth of God being ravished, enthralled, overcome, and filled with desire for humans that are redeemed. His longing for you is seen in the fact that ***He chose you as His eternal partner and betrothed you as His bride.*** This causes us to reinterpret our lives entirely different in light of this holy obsession. ***This redefines everything about us:*** we see God’s passion, desire and longing, and we see ourselves as a virgin, an espoused desired bride. Our image of God and our image of ourselves changes when we see these two truths. When we feel differently about ourselves, we will act different.
- C. These two truths are foundational to our lives as they disarm one of our most powerful emotions which is fear of rejection from both God and people. Fear is a powerful destructive force.
- D. God uses the knowledge of God, or divine information anointed by the Spirit, to enter our heart and remove distorted information about God that empowers us to walk in love.
- E. Our core spiritual identity – Are we essentially a slave to sin who struggles to love God? Or are we essentially a lover of God who still struggle with sin? Are you a hopeless hypocrite who is trying in a futile attempt to love God or are you an authentic lover of God who is still struggling?
- F. Do you feel chosen, and desired and clean? Do you feel like a betrothed virgin? Do you feel like a clean desired chosen one who is longed for by Jesus? Do we define ourselves by our struggles or by His work on the cross and passion for us as Bridegroom God? Many believers define themselves by their struggle. ***When we feel shame then we often will live shamefully. When God’s corporate woman (the Church) feels clean, loved and filled with dignity, then she is powerful. She is tenacious in love; as one who cannot be denied.*** God is raising up a corporate woman, who looks clean, feels clean, looks loved, and lives loved. She is called the Church, with a bridal paradigm at the end of the age.

VI. DECEIVED BY FALSE TEACHINGS

³*But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted [led astray, NAS] from the simplicity that is in Christ [purity of devotion to Christ, NAS].*

⁴*For 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 11:3-4)*

- A. Paul warned us about how Satan the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness.
- B. The false teachers, called Judaizers told them lies about Jesus and the gospel. They preached another Jesus, and operated in a different spirit with a different gospel and Corinth put up with it!
 - 1. *Another Jesus* – Judaizers preached “another Jesus.” They believed that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah, but not one who offered the gift of righteousness by faith nor was He understood as the Bridegroom God filled with desire for His people.
 - 2. *Another gospel* – Their gospel kept them in the identity of a slave of sin. This false gospel had law as its motivating foundation. The true gospel is motivated by the free gift given. Their false teaching required that one earn God’s favor and salvation. God would only relate to them according to how they were attaining ‘spiritually’. God was only interested in them to the degree they kept the rules. Their gospel was one they earned.
 - 3. *A different spirit* – They operated in a spirit of condemnation, fear, threatening, and bondage. The spirit of bondage never empowers the human heart in love nor transforms the believer into an extravagant lover of God. It does not impart the power to obey and thus to walk in love.
- C. Paul was sent to them by God to betroth them to Christ by bringing the gospel with a free Spirit that has a confidence in God even in their immaturity.
- D. False ideas about God harm us by hindering us from growing in love.
- E. Paul used the hammer of God’s Word to destroy these accusations and lies against Jesus.