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SPIRIT OF LIFE MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL
BIBLE SCHOOL THIRD EDITION
SESSION 25 – SPIRITUAL WARFARE PART 9
OVERCOMING STRONGHOLDS



Strongholds mean exactly what the word implies. They are areas of land which have a *strong hold*. A fortified structure which is able to resist an assault by enemy forces is the picture of a spiritual stronghold. An army invading enemy territory needs to take down the strongholds to hold the land. If strongholds remain, they will become a continual threat to the army and citizens in the land.

When we were lost, we were under enemy control and our lives were subject to strongholds. These strongholds were constructed for a purpose. They were designed to keep us lost. Satan, in his war against mankind, is in the business of constructing strongholds which feed our fallen nature. His desire is to keep us blind from the Gospel of Christ, so we perish in a lost condition.

II Corinthians 4:3-4 *“3 But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, 4 whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.”*

When we come to Christ, the army of the Lord invades our life and the battle for territory has begun. Satan is not willing to give ground to his enemy, the Lord of Hosts and he does not want us to live a successful spiritual life. Therefore, his goal is to keep as many strongholds standing in our life as he can, allowing him to wage war on our souls. Remember, Satan’s goal is to prevent the power of God from being established in the believer’s life. He does this through strongholds. If Satan can establish areas of operation in our life, he then will have the ability to attack at will. He can then keep us from being on the offensive against his kingdom.

For this reason, it’s imperative for us to have these Satanic strongholds pulled down. If we don’t remove strongholds, we invite failure and defeat in our spiritual walk because we are giving Satan a base from which to wage war. The only way we can assault spiritual strongholds is through the power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in our life. Without the heavenly power in our lives, we are at Satan’s mercy. The Holy Spirit, through Paul, shows us how to wage war.

Being a soldier in the Lord's army, we should have a clear view and vision of the landscape before us. This section of scripture addresses these vital areas of understanding.

II Corinthians 10:3-5 *"3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. 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,"*

- Where the war is fought
- How the war is fought
- How we wage war
- How victory is achieved



verse 3

we walk in the flesh: We live in the physical world, in the world of flesh and blood, and this is where we see the work of the spiritual realms played out. We cannot divorce ourselves from the flesh, but this is not where our battle takes place. The evil we see in this world is the result of this spiritual war, however, this is not where the battle is taking place. We need to change our perspective as the Lord's army. We need to train our spiritual eyes, recognizing the source of this conflict.

according to the flesh: As the Lord's army, we waste our time waging war using weapons of flesh because that is not where the battle is. Paul wants us to understand the nature of war in the spiritual realms. Many times, we can waste our energy focusing on the wrong solutions to a problem. We might think secular counsel or therapy can solve our problems when the issue is spiritual.

To understand this war, let's take a married couple, Jim and Sandy Smith for example. They are having tremendous conflicts within the marriage. Jim's anger is out of control and Sandy is disgusted by his rage. She thinks Jim is having a self-esteem problem and he is taking it out on her. Sandy is thinking about divorce because she can't handle these outbursts and life is no longer fun. Jim, after work, has so much stress, he needs to stop at the bar, have a few drinks and watch some sports to unwind. He hates going home because he feels so put down and he does not get respect. Their kids Jimmy 8 and Johnny 10 are having nightmares because mommy and daddy are always fighting. Everything seems like it's falling apart for the Smith family.

Sandy Smith has a friend, Melody, a Christian, who has asked Sandy if she would like to go to church. However, for Sandy, Sunday is the only day she can relax. She spends her time on Saturday driving the kids from one sporting event to another, and she needs Sunday to herself. Melody understands the answer here is not secular counseling, money, a job promotion, or more things. This family needs the Lord in their lives, so she knows it involves spiritual warfare.

Melody knows both Jim and Sandy do not know the Lord and Satan would love to destroy this family, creating misery and anger at a God they never knew. Melody is at war for the souls of a family who is entrapped by strongholds they don't even know exist. Melody understands what scripture means, ***though we walk in the flesh.... we do not war according to the flesh***. Melody sees with Spiritual eyes, through the lens of scripture.

Many times, we Christians fail to see the Spiritual war taking place around us. Our eyes need spiritual training. We have to train ourselves to see through the lens of scripture.

How the war is fought

II Corinthians 10:4 **the weapons of our warfare:** In the description of the armor of God, only two offensive weapons are listed. The shield, breastplate, belt, shoes, and helmet are essential, but they are mainly defensive in nature. Our offensive weapons are the word of God, which is ***the sword of the Spirit*** (Hebrews 4:12, Eph 6:17) and ***prayer*** (Eph. 6:18).

The Word of God

The Bible is a weapon. The world we live in is subject to the invisible spiritual world, created by Almighty God's word.

Hebrews 11:3 (NKJV) ***"3By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible."***

God works according to His word which means God's Word is stationary, while the world is fluid. The spiritual world is subject to God's authority, and therefore subject to God's word.

In **Matthew 28:18-20**, Jesus declares He has all authority in Heaven and on Earth. Jesus then gives His authority to us. We operate under His authority. Therefore, knowing His word allows us to wield a weapon that both the physical and spiritual worlds are subject to.

The sword of the spirit has eternal implications while an earthly sword can only have an effect in the physical world. The universe is subject to God's word, let alone in our neighborhood.

Prayer

Along with the word of God (sword of the Spirit) we have prayer (Eph. 6:18). *The word of God, along with the power of prayer, create the most formidable weapons in the universe.* Think about it, God made the Heavens and the Earth through His word alone! Now because of Christ's work on the cross, we now have access to God's throne in Heaven. We have the power and authority to access the throne of God in Heaven.

Hebrews 4:15-16 (NKJV) *"15 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. "*

The Lord works according to His word. By understanding and applying God's word, we have access to the same power which created the universe.

The power of prayer as a weapon has no limits. Remember Daniel; he was praying about his people who were captives in the Babylonian and then Persian kingdoms. The prince of Persia was moved out of the way because of Daniel's prayer. The level of the person's faith determines the size of the stronghold that they are willing to wage war with.

How we wage war

not carnal but mighty in God: Carnal means flesh, but the weapons we use access heavenly power, the power of God. The spiritual realms operate all around us, but the natural world does not comprehend the spiritual.

Therefore, the natural tends to ridicule the spiritual. The Holy Spirit wants us to know just what type of power we have as contrasted to the carnal. The word mighty used here in the Greek is *Dunatos*, which means able, powerful, and strong. The word has the same root word as our word for dynamite. Our weapon in other words is spiritual dynamite.

pulling down strongholds: With this "spiritual dynamite," we have the ability to literally pull down strongholds. What does Paul mean by strongholds? Paul defines this term in the next verse as anything which exalts or puts itself up against the knowledge of God. There are many levels of strongholds, small scale, and large scale. We have individual strongholds such as alcoholism, racism, and pride that we face on a personal level. There are also worldwide strongholds, exerting power over large groups of people such as Islam, atheism, materialism, and pornography. The term stronghold means an area where an entrenched power exerts control over an individual, group, generation, or territory in opposition to the knowledge of

God. We, the army of the Lord on earth, use our weapons to pull down or destroy these strongholds. The Greek word for stronghold is, **Ochuroma**, which means a castle, stronghold, fortress, fastness. We are to destroy these structures using our spiritual weapons.

Returning to our story of the Smith family, Melody, Sandy Smith's friend, understands strongholds. She understands the Smith family from a spiritual lens and Melody seeks to uncover the strongholds in her friends' life. Melody, a warrior for the Lord, knows Sandra Smith did not come into her life for no reason and Melody understands she must now intercede for the souls of this family. Using scripture and prayer, Melody has the power of God to overcome strongholds.

Through the battles in her own life, overcoming the strongholds of sin, she learned how to wage war. Melody, through war, learned the power of scripture and prayer. Melody is battling for the souls of this family, conducting spiritual warfare on Satan's domain.

The powers of strongholds are not just on a personal scale for they also affect generations, and large segments of populations. For example, alcoholism, the addiction to alcohol, can have a stronghold on entire generations of families. Religions are also strongholds which claim billions of souls entrapped in deceit.

For this reason, not every believer fights the same battle. Some are called to distant lands to confront strongholds. Missionaries who bring the Gospel to areas of darkness are doing exactly that, they are confronting spiritual strongholds on enemy territory. God calls others to a mission in their own neighborhood bringing the light of the Gospel to their next-door neighbor like Melody. Wherever we find ourselves, we are on God's mission until we are called elsewhere. Our goal is to advance the gospel, pull down strongholds, and to bring people into the Kingdom of God. That is our purpose.

II Cor. 10:5

In **verse 5**, strongholds are defined as **arguments (imagination) and high things** which are placed above the knowledge of God. By comparing the knowledge of God to our actions and thoughts we can expose not only our strongholds, but the strongholds of those around us.

For example, someone might know pornography is wrong and against God's word, but they watch it anyways despite the knowledge of sin. Why? Because the power of the stronghold has overcome the person's inner objections. This is where the control or stronghold comes from. This exposed stronghold should then become a target for the believer to attack. Our mission is to literally destroy these arguments and high things.

casting down arguments: The word argument or imaginations in Greek is *Logismos*, which means logic, reasoning, or understanding. We are to pull down false ways of thinking, or false reasoning. This covers a very broad spectrum on both small and large scales. Many of our “isms” are essentially spiritual strongholds of false reasoning. Take your pick, Communism, Hinduism, Alcoholism, Atheism, Racism, and more, are all forms of logic which make sense to the people entrapped. We are called to cast down or destroy this false logic.



High places of ancient Israeli city of Arad

and every high thing: What is a high thing? In ancient Israel one of the besetting sins of the people was their setting up of images on hilltops and in groves. The pagans of Canaan (Palestine) were removed from the land for their sins because the people of Israel were to be a holy and upright people. They were to be different than the people of the land before their occupation. However, Israel soon began to adopt the customs of the people around.

They disobeyed God by setting up competing places of worship. They set up idols and images in high places in defiance of God.

2 Kings 17:9-12 *"9 Also the children of Israel secretly did against the Lord their God things that were not right, and they built for themselves high places in all their cities, from watchtower to fortified city. 10 They set up for themselves sacred pillars and wooden images on every high hill and under every green tree. 11 There they burned incense on all the high places, like the nations whom the Lord had carried away before them; and they did wicked things to provoke the Lord to anger, 12 for they served idols, of which the Lord had said to them, "You shall not do this thing."*

Paul uses this imagery to illustrate the picture of a stronghold. A stronghold does not only have to be a way of thinking, but it can also be an idol that we have set up to worship. For example, our business, clothes, cars, and homes can become a high thing because we choose to exalt the material thing above the knowledge of God.

When we examine the various kings of Israel, we get a contrast in people. Some kings were noted for their wickedness, others were praised for being faithful. Many times, it's how the kings responded to high places which indicated the level of their relationship and sincerity with the Lord.

Jeroboam (king of Israel B.C. 975-954)

II Chronicles 11:15-16 *“15 Then he appointed for himself priests for the high places, for the demons, and the calf idols which he had made. 16 And after the Levites left, those from all the tribes of Israel, such as set their heart to seek the Lord God of Israel, came to Jerusalem to sacrifice to the Lord God of their fathers.”*

Jehoshaphat (914 B.C., King of Judah)

II Chronicles 20:32-33 *“32 And he walked in the way of his father Asa, and did not turn aside from it, doing what was right in the sight of the Lord. 33 Nevertheless the high places were not taken away, for as yet the people had not directed their hearts to the God of their fathers.”*

Josiah (641 B.C. King of Judah)

II Chronicles 34:3 *“3For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was still young, he began to seek the God of his father David; and in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of the high places, the wooden images, the carved images, and the molded images, wooden images, the carved images, and the molded images.”*

The same is the case today. Are we willing to remove our high-places, or things which compete for worship with the Lord? Josiah was a praised king. He was young when he became king, only eight years old. When he was 16, he began to seek God with a sincere heart and during his reign Judah had a revival. Both Daniel and Ezekiel were the product of the revival. Jeremiah cried at the death of Josiah, who was considered one of the most righteous kings of Judah. What separated Josiah from the others was his sincere heart and his willingness to do what others would not do. He did not want anything to compete with the Lord, no matter how unpopular it made him. God blessed his reign because he removed the high places.

As part of the Lord’s army, our job is to pull down the high things, the idols set up in the lives of people. We are to be salt in the earth.

that exalts itself against the knowledge of God: Anything, whether intentional or non-intentional, which is placed above God is an idol. Strongholds are fortified areas which are opposed to the knowledge of God.

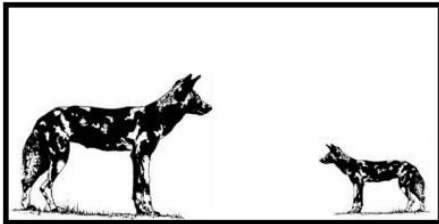
How victory is achieved

This would include arguments and high things, which compete for truth.

bringing every thought into captivity: We are to subject this fallen world to the power of Christ. How are these strongholds destroyed? By bringing every thought into captivity. Our minds and hearts need to submit to the will of the Lord. First, we need to make the decision before we can be effective on the spiritual battlefield to make our thoughts subject to the God's will.

Isaiah 55:7-9 *"7 Let the wicked forsake his way, And the unrighteous man his thoughts; Let him return to the Lord, And He will have mercy on him; And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon. 8 "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways," says the Lord. 9 "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.*

Jeremiah 4:14 *"14 O Jerusalem, wash your heart from wickedness, that you may be saved. How long shall your evil thoughts lodge within you?"*



Whichever spirit you feed will control your life. If you feed your spirit with the word of God, you will overcome these strongholds. If you feed your carnal nature (your flesh) then the strongholds will get bigger. Think of it like a dog fight. The stronger dog will always win.