**DIVINE POWER TO DEMOLISH SATAN’S STRONGHOLDS**

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2 Corinthians 10:1-11:15

Key Verse 10:4 “The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.”

In chapters 10-12, Paul defends his apostleship. Some false apostles were discrediting Paul in an attempt to hijack the Corinthian church for their own gain. Paul was compelled to help the Corinthians hold on to gospel faith for the glory of Christ and their own salvation. So he defended his apostleship. In doing so, Paul fights like a spiritual general against the forces of evil. Someone said, “The devil’s greatest trick is to make men believe he does not exist.” If the devil comes to us with a horn, we would recognize him and run away. But he disguises himself as an angel of light. He may even carry the Bible and uses religious words such as God and Jesus. But he plants doubt of God’s love and twists the truth. The battlefield is our minds. Satan comes and establishes the strongholds in our minds through superstitious belief, an addiction, worries, wrong thoughts, and despair. We have to learn how to fight the spiritual war and demolish the strongholds. The good news is that God has given us weapons to fight. They are the word of God and Spirit-empowered prayer. They have divine power to demolish Satan’s strongholds.

Look at verse 10:1. “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!” Paul had served God’s flock with the meekness and gentleness of Christ. He did not raise his voice or exercise authority harshly, but was compassionate and tender like a mother. So he was misunderstood. Some criticized him for being ‘timid’ in face to face meetings while ‘bold’ when writing letters from a distance. Verse 10 says, “For some say, ‘His letters are weighty and forceful, but in person he is unimpressive and his speech amounts to nothing.’” In this world, we should look tough and strong in person. Otherwise we are despised as weak. We wear a mask because we want to give everyone the impression that we are strong, while on the inside we are hurting. Jessie Ventura, the former wrestler, and former Governor of Minnesota once said that those who do attend church regularly are pathetic weak minded individuals who don’t know any better and he doesn’t need anybody’s help, and that includes the church and God.

Paul hoped that they would correct their attitude before he arrived. If not, he was prepared to be decisive and bold in dealing with them. In fact, Paul was ready to wage war. However, Paul would not wage war the way the world does (3). Paul would engage in spiritual warfare. Paul knew that our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms (Eph 6:12). In verses 4-6 Paul explains what the weapons of spiritual warfare are and how to fight.

Look at verses 10:4-5. “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.” A stronghold is anything that exalts itself in our minds--“pretending” to be bigger or more powerful than our God such as the speculations, imaginations or the thought that exalt itself in our minds and cause us to feel overpowered. Whether the stronghold is a superstitious belief, an addiction, wrong thoughts, worries, and despair over a loss, etc. – it is something that consumes our emotional and mental strength. That abundant life that we are supposed to be enjoying in Christ is strangled. We become ineffective and tired Christians. Verse 10:4 says that the devil wants to establish ‘strongholds’ in our lives. It means it is strong—New American Standard Bible says fortresses – it is a ‘strong hold’ on us. They cannot be swept away with a broom. We cannot complain at them and make them flee. We cannot ignore them. Satan’s strongholds need to be conquered and broken down.

We are at war. We need to know what weapons to use against the enemy. The devil is unseen, therefore the weapons of the world won’t do. Paul says we use a different set of weapons. In this warfare, Paul says the primary battlefield is the MIND. To win this war against Satan, we need to take control of our thought life – “take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.” The devil’s chief target is the mind, because the most effective way to influence behavior is to influence thinking. He did that to Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden—doubting God’s truth; to Jesus in the temptation in the wilderness, twisting God’s truth. Satan wants to make us believe we are weak. Satan makes us believe that we are worthless. Satan makes us believe that God does not care, and there is no point in trusting in God. In our war against Satan, we “take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.” We have to believe what the Word of God says.

What are our weapons? According to this passage, we have 4 vital pieces of information regarding these weapons:
1. They are not the weapons of the world
2. They have divine power
3. They are associated with the ‘knowledge of God.’
4. Their purpose in warfare is to take our thoughts captive – aligning back to Christ.

In Ephesians 6:13-18, Paul listed the whole armor of God. “Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.”

Only one piece of the armor is an offensive weapon – the sword. The belt, breastplate, shield, shoes and helmet are all defensive, protective pieces of armor intended to keep us from being injured by the weapons of the evil one. The sword of the Spirit – clearly identified as the Word of God, is the only offensive weapon listed in the whole armor of God. When Jesus was tempted by the devil in the wilderness, He fought back with the Word of God. Another primary weapon of our warfare is prayer. Ephesians 6:18 says, “And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.” We fight when we pray. We fight on our knees! It is quite clear from the Bible that we have these two major weapons in our hands –in this war against the devil – the Word of God, and Spirit-empowered prayer! These two weapons have divine power to demolish Satan’s strongholds. What are we fighting for? Verse 8 says, “For even if I boast somewhat freely about the authority the Lord gave us for building you up rather than pulling you down.” We are fighting to build up God’s flock.

We are also fighting to present our flock to Christ as a pure virgin. Look at verse 11:2. “I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him.” The picture presented in this verse is that of a father giving away his bride. Paul has already called himself their father (1Cor.4:15), he has arranged the marriage with the groom. Paul, like the father of a bride, was concerned that his bride be right for her groom on their wedding day. We are ‘betrothed’ to one husband, Jesus, and we should be concerned that the tests we face in this world do not leave us with both spot and wrinkle. If Satan cannot make us lost, he can work hard to make us impure for the day we meet our Bridegroom.

Our purity is a treasure to Satan. Even though Paul thought it might sound foolish, he expressed a ‘godly jealousy’ for the believers in Corinth. He had a jealousy for their purity before Christ. He knew they lived and walked in the midst of a very corrupt culture and he prayed for their spiritual safety. A father of a bride is not jealous that she is finding another man other than himself, but he is jealous for her to find the best man for her. In Paul’s day one of the biggest moral concerns in a society was that a father kept his daughter pure for her groom on their wedding day. It was considered his responsibility. Even in immoral Corinth this was still understood.

Look at verse 11:3. “But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent’s cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ.” One theologian says, “Satan does not come to us as the arch-enemy of God, the ultimate evildoer. He comes disguised as an angel of light. He would rather look like Mother Theresa than Hitler. If the arch-enemy of God operates by deceit and disguise, why should we expect his underlings to be different from their master? They, too, come to us disguised as servants of righteousness, or as Jesus said, as ‘wolves in sheep’s clothing.’”

Satan influences our minds: our minds will be led astray. Satan wasn’t asking Eve to become a drug addict or an alcoholic. He didn’t want her to rob a bank or even to kill someone. What he wanted was her devotion to God. Satan wants to lead us stray from our sincere and pure devotion to Christ, by making us get caught in the things of the world.

Look at verse 11:4. “For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough.” Paul mentions a counterfeit Christianity that Satan uses to attack the sincerity of our faith. Preach another Jesus…receive a different spirit…receive a different gospel. All the way back to the time of Paul, Satan has used false teachers to come in and try to hijack the true church. One of the duties of the friends of the Bridegroom was to protect the bride from those who would threaten her purity.

First, another Jesus. Everyone who uses the name Jesus isn’t necessarily talking about the same Jesus. A false teacher will talk about Jesus and often sound very biblical. Who are these other Jesuses? Mormon Jesus: spirit brother of Lucifer who became the devil. Muslim Jesus: prophet of God second to Mohammed, did miracles but did not die on the cross but was replaced by another who died in his place. Oprah’s Jesus: Jesus Christ is thought of as just one of those rare people who, like the Buddha, achieved divine consciousness; other religions, such as Buddhism, are considered just as valid and true as Christianity. Oprah quotes a book by Eckhart Tolle in her show: “A new heaven and a new earth are arising within you at this moment, and if they are not arising at this moment, they are no more than a thought in your head and therefore not arising at all. What did Jesus tell his disciples? ‘Heaven is right here in the midst of you.’” Cleary, her Jesus is not the same Jesus in the Bible. Who is the real Jesus? He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He was crucified in our place on the cross as a ransom sacrifice and rose again from the dead on the third day. He will come again to judge the living and the dead as the King of kings and the Lord of lords.

Second, a different spirit. There are many who pretend to have miracles or spiritual experiences.
Just like the magicians of Egypt they claim to be equal to others who represent God. Jesus will say on the day of judgment to many who did things such as preach in his name, cast out demons and do miracles, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers.’ Something spiritual does not mean something godly. Not every spirit is from God. That is why 1 John 4:1 says, “Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.”

Third, a different gospel. There are many variations that have departed from the one true gospel. All the other gospels in the world have the same message: works. They all teach in their own way that our acceptance by God is based upon certain types of works we do instead of the one act Jesus did for us on the cross. The gospel of our day seems to be the gospel of ‘Let’s get along. Let’s not be bigoted’; or the gospel of tolerance: Let’s not judge people for their sinful lifestyle. If there is a doctrine Satan hates the most, it is: we are justified by faith and not by works; That our redemption is by the blood of Jesus and that it is the free grace of God that makes a man right with him and not our own works.

In conclusion, our enemy Satan is working behind the scenes to plant doubt, fear, rebellion, a disobedient spirit and most of all, pride. Then he makes people prisoners in his stronghold.

1. Satan would like to COMPLICATE it: He leads us away from the simple call upon us to recognize God for who he is and to worship him.

2. Satan would like to COMPROMISE it: He causes us to lose our primary devotion to Jesus Christ. Using the things of this world to draw us away, Satan will attempt to lead us to waste a lifetime by missing God’s plan for our lives.

We must hold on to “the gospel” and “the Jesus.” Then God will empower us with powerful spiritual weapons, “The word of God” and “Spirit-empowered prayer” which have divine power to demolish Satan’s strongholds.