

INTRODUCTION

- * Last week, we began focusing on the next section of Paul's 2nd letter to the Corinthians.
- * Throughout the letter, Paul has built his exhortations and encouragements around the central theme of believers living their lives within an atmosphere of afflictions. He began his letter discussing the purpose of afflictions and then sharing from his own life. He then provided encouragement, by reminding the believers of their new standing in Christ and how they are being continually changed from glory to glory. God, as the Master Sculptor, is chiseling away on us – His new creations! He who began the good work in us IS CONTINUING to perform it ... UNTIL the day of Christ! He is molding us and conforming us to the image of His blessed Son – according to His promise and plan!
- * As that work is being accomplished, there will be opposition in the spiritual realm. As we considered the "Weapons of our Warfare" last week, we saw that, again, that God's primary desire is for ALL people to come to the knowledge of the truth. Hence, He has given us this word of truth in the Scriptures, has given a charge to the church to be the pillar and foundation of that truth, and has challenged believers to see it as the first element of the armor which He has given to us to use in the spiritual war.
- * There has been opposition to the truth of the Word of God from the beginning. Just as Eve was deceived by the serpent, so also do many individuals fall to the wiles of the devil as he attacks the validity and sufficiency of the Word of God. His goal is to get us to detract from ... or add to .. God's Word, in order that we might not live in obedience to it.
- * Today, we begin considering how we are to utilize the "Weapons of our Warfare" ... for they ARE to be used! Today, we want to examine the first of the four areas listed by Paul – "For pulling down strongholds."

INSTRUCTION**I. THE IDENTIFICATION OF OUR WEAPONS (cf. Ephesians 6:10-19)**

- A. **The Belt of Truth** (cf. 1 Timothy 2:3-4; John 17:16-19; 1 Timothy 3:15; Ephesians 4:11-16, 25)
- B. **The Breastplate of Righteousness** (cf. Philippians 3:7-9; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Romans 5:19; Isaiah 53:11) ... *The Righteousness of Christ!*
- C. **The Footwear of the Gospel** (cf. Romans 1:16; 10:13-15; Isaiah 40:9; 52:7; 2 Corinthians 5:18-20; Matthew 28:19-20)
- D. **The Shield of Faith** (cf. Psalm 5:12; 18:2,30; 28:7; 91:4; 115:9-11; Hebrews 11:6) ... *To quench the fiery darts of the wicked one!*
- E. **The Helmet of Salvation** (cf. Titus 2:11; Acts 4:12; Rom 10:8-10; 2 Thess 2:13-14; Eph 1:13-14; 1 Thess 5:8-10; 1 Peter 1:3-5)
- F. **The Sword of the Spirit** (cf. Heb 4:12; Rev 1:16; 2:16; 19:15; Matt 4:4,7,10-11; Acts 6:1-7; 1 Thess 2:13) ... the Word of God!
- G. **The Power of Prayer** (cf. Colossians 4:2; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18; 2 Timothy 1:3; Matthew 26:41; 1 Peter 4:7; Acts 12:5)

II. THE UTILIZATION OF OUR WEAPONS**A. For Pulling Down Strongholds**

1. THE STRONGHOLD OF I _____
 - a. In _____
 - i. *THE RE* _____ (cf. Romans 10:3; 11:25; 1 Thessalonians 4:13; 1 Corinthians 10:1; 12:1)
 - ii. *THE RE* _____ (cf. Mark 9:28-32; Romans 2:3-11)
 - b. In _____ (cf. 2 Peter 2:12 [1-12]; 3:3-6; Jude 1:8-10)
2. THE STRONGHOLD OF I _____
 - a. The H _____ (cf. Genesis 11:4; Joshua 24:2; Exodus 20:3-5)
 - b. The W _____ (cf. 1 John 5:21; 1 Corinthians 10:1-22; 12:1-2; Revelation 2:14; Matthew 6:24; Acts 19:23-36)
3. THE STRONGHOLD OF I _____

(cf. Romans 6:16-8; 7:14-25; 13:11-14; Titus 2:11-14; 1 John 4:4; 5:4-5; Joshua 1:7-9; Psalm 119:11)
4. THE STRONGHOLD OF I _____
 - a. The Fear of M _____ (cf. Acts 4:1-31; 5:27-29; 17:13; Matthew 10:22-33; Galatians 1:10)
 - b. The Fear of D _____ (cf. Matthew 16:18; 1 Corinthians 15:54-57; Hebrews 2:14-15; Romans 8:35-37)

B. For Casting Down Arguments**C. For Bringing Every Thought into Captivity****D. For Preparing Justice****INTROSPECTION**

- * What stronghold are you currently seeking to overcome? Or, have you given yourself over to it?
- * Are you trusting in the power, strength, and victory of Christ?
- * How do you view the ultimate battle? Is it about you, or about the kingdom of God?
- * Is there a need to change the way you think ... and therefore act?

INTERACTION ... Thoughts & Questions to ponder for later discussion

It may be helpful to re-read the passage before the discussion.

- * How can we, lovingly and effectively, help each other in the pulling down of strongholds? What is required by each side?

Romans 10:1-3 ¹ Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. ² For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. ³ For **they being ignorant of God's righteousness**, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, **have not submitted to the righteousness of God**.

Romans 11:25 For **I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion**, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.

1 Thessalonians 4:13 But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope.

1 Corinthians 10:1-22 ¹ Moreover, brethren, **I do not want you to be unaware (lit. ignorant!)** that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea ... ⁷ And **do not become idolaters as were some of them**.

1 Corinthians 12:1-2 ¹ Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, **I do not want you to be ignorant:** ² You know that you were Gentiles, **carried away to these dumb idols**, however you were led.

Mark 9:28-32 ²⁸ And when He had come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, "Why could we not cast it out?" ²⁹ So He said to them, "This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting." ³⁰ Then they departed from there and passed through Galilee, and He did not want anyone to know it. ³¹ For He taught His disciples and said to them, "The Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him. And after He is killed, He will rise the third day." ³² But **they did not understand** this saying, and were afraid to ask Him.

v. 32 They were ignorant ... and had a phobia about asking for help ... this is ultimately pride

Romans 2:3-11 ³ And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God? ⁴ Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, **not knowing** that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? ⁵ But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, ⁶ who "WILL RENDER TO EACH ONE ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS": ⁷ eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; ⁸ but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness--indignation and wrath, ⁹ tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; ¹⁰ but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹¹ For there is no partiality with God.

* Ignorance is NOT bliss! Ignorance (and especially willful ignorance) leads to impenitence ... and judgment!

2 Peter 2:1-12 ¹ But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. ² And many will follow their destructive ways, **because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed**. ³ By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber. ⁴ For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment; ⁵ and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly; ⁶ and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly; ⁷ and delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked ⁸ (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds)-- ⁹ then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment, ¹⁰ and especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority. They are presumptuous, self-willed. They are not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries, ¹¹ whereas angels, who are greater in power and might, do not bring a reviling accusation against them before the Lord. ¹² But these, like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed, **speaking evil of the things they do not understand, and will utterly perish in their own corruption**

2 Peter 3:3-6 ³ knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, ⁴ and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation." ⁵ **For this they willfully forget:** that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, ⁶ by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water.

Jude 1:8-10 ⁸ Likewise also these dreamers defile the flesh, reject authority, and speak evil of dignitaries. ⁹ Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!" ¹⁰ But **these speak evil of whatever they do not know**; and whatever they know naturally, like brute beasts, in these things they corrupt themselves.

1 Corinthians 10:1-22 ¹Moreover, brethren, **I do not want you to be unaware (lit. ignorant!)** that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, ² all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, ³ all ate the same spiritual food, ⁴ and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. ⁵ But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. ⁶ Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. ⁷ And **do not become idolaters as were some of them.** As it is written, "THE PEOPLE SAT DOWN TO EAT AND DRINK, AND ROSE UP TO PLAY." ⁸ Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell; ⁹ nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; ¹⁰ nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer. ¹¹ Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. ¹²

Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. ¹³ **No temptation has overtaken you** except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it. ¹⁴ **Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.** ¹⁵ I speak as to wise men; judge for yourselves what I say. ¹⁶ The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? ¹⁷ For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread. ¹⁸ Observe Israel after the flesh: Are not those who eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar? ¹⁹ What am I saying then? That an idol is anything, or what is offered to idols is anything? ²⁰ Rather, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons. ²¹ You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons. ²² Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than He?

1 Corinthians 12:1-2 Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant: 2 You know that you were Gentiles, carried away to these dumb idols, however you were led.

Acts 19:23-26 And about that time there arose a great commotion about the Way. 24 For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Diana, brought no small profit to the craftsmen. 25 He called them together with the workers of similar occupation, and said: "Men, you know that we have our prosperity by this trade. 26 Moreover you see and hear that not only at Ephesus, but throughout almost all Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away many people, saying that they are not gods which are made with hands.

1 John 5:21 Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.

Revelation 2:14 But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality.

Romans 6:16-18 Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness? 17 But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. 18 And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

Romans 7:14-25 For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. 15 For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. 16 If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. 17 But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. 18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. 19 For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. 20 Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. 21 I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. 22 For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. 23 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. 24 O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? 25 I thank God--through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.

Romans 13:11-14 And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. 12 The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. 13 Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. 14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.

Titus 2:11-14 For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, 12 teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, 13 looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, 14 who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.

1 John 4:4 You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.

1 John 5:4-5 For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world--our faith. 5 Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

Joshua 1:7-9 Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. 8 This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. 9 Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."

Psalms 119:11 Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You.

Acts 4:1-31; 5:27-29 ... The arrest, threatening, and flogging of Peter and John for proclaiming that Jesus is the Messiah
Acts 4:13, 17-21, 29-31; 5:27-29 13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus. ... 17 But so that it spreads no further among the people, let us severely threaten them, that from now on they speak to no man in this name." 18 So they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. 19 But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. 20 For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." 21 So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way of punishing them, because of the people, since they all glorified God for what had been done. 29 Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, 30 by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus." 31 And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness. 5:27-29 27 And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest asked them, 28 saying, "Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man's blood on us!" 29 But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: "We ought to obey God rather than men.

Acts 17:13 But when the Jews from Thessalonica learned that the word of God was preached by Paul at Berea, they came there also and stirred up the crowds.

Matthew 10:22-33 And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved. 23 When they persecute you in this city, flee to another. For assuredly, I say to you, you will not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes. 24 "A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. 25 It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more will they call those of his household! 26 Therefore do not fear them. For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known. 27 "Whatever I tell you in the dark, speak in the light; and what you hear in the ear, preach on the housetops. 28 And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. 29 Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will. 30 But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. 31 Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows. 32 "Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. 33 But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven.

Galatians 1:10 For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.

Matthew 16:18 And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

1 Corinthians 15:54-57 So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP IN VICTORY." 55 "O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING? O HADES, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY?" 56 The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 2:14-15 Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, 15 and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

Romans 8:35-37 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36 As it is written: "FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE KILLED ALL DAY LONG; WE ARE ACCOUNTED AS SHEEP FOR THE SLAUGHTER." 37 Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.