

2 Corinthians 10

Sunday 3/10/2013

I. Introduction to 2 Corinthians and the Ministry

We are going to officially enter into 2 Corinthians chapter 10. For those of you that are visiting our church today, just so you understand kind of where we are at as a church, it might help you put things together a little bit better today. We realize that the ministry is people. The only reason God saved us and gave us churches was to learn how to help people and help others through the struggles of life as God gets us and gives us the victory through our struggles. That is what we are all about.

In the process of that, our church has been here now, I think it will be 10 years this year, and we have been working almost every year on bringing it up to another level. We have tremendous opportunities that God gives us and a great bunch of people who understand that concept that the ministry is people. So we have been working over the last four or five years really taking and fine-tuning ourselves to people and the ministry.

Last year, probably it was, I think it was maybe a year and a half ago, I told them that there is no greater book in the Bible that teaches us how to minister than the book of 2 Corinthians. The book of 2 Corinthians, without a doubt, is the handbook of ministry for us. It is a great book because it follows 1 Corinthians. Most people look at the books in the Bible and they do not understand that each book has a particular reason for being where it is at and what it brings to us.

The church at Corinth was a church that had a lot of struggles and they had a lot of issues. In 1 Corinthians, basically what Paul does chapter by chapter, he goes through and he tries to help this church. He had started this church sometime before. They got off on the good foot, but then they got off on the wrong foot a little bit later on. A lot of things had crept in. A lot of people were growing up and they were not spiritually mature, and the church had degenerated into what Paul says, "a church of spiritual babies."

In 1 Corinthians, he goes through and lays out chapter by chapter every problem that they have, and sometimes multiple issues that they struggle with. At some place in the process, the majority of the church wants to do what is right. So then he writes the book of 2 Corinthians to them, and in the book of 2 Corinthians, this is where now he begins to teach them how to minister. Where the first book taught them and showed us what was wrong with it and the things not to do, the book of 2 Corinthians, chapter by chapter, he shows us how to minister, and every chapter is a different aspect of the ministry. We have seen all kinds of things about it and we have laid it all out.

Last week, I gave you the introduction to chapter 10. We did not get into it, but I wanted to kind of give you the introduction of chapter 10 because chapter 10 deals with the mind of the minister. I told you last week and I gave you a great example in 2 Kings chapter 4 of how we are to understand how people think. One of the keys of being successful and working with people is understanding why people think the way they think. One of the real keys of being effective and helping people get their lives turned around is understanding why people do what they do.

I think the biggest struggle that we all have when you start to work with people is to understand and realize why people see things the way that they do. You have two people that have a different opinion about something. One of them is obviously right and one of them is obviously wrong. You find that in working with people. This is the beauty of the Operation Turnaround where so many of you are going to get a chance now to actually use everything that we talk about and you are going to see this. Some of you will excel to it to the point that it will really fine-tune you and make you because you will come away understanding why people do the things that they do, why people say what they say, and why they look at things in life and they see it the way that they see it.

Today we will start to look at this book and it really lays out the real battle. We talk about life's battles, life's struggles, and all of those things, but in reality, the real battle of life that we all face is the battle for our mind, what we think about. We talked about that last week. In fact, I showed you how that though every chapter is key in this book, the last three chapters have been very important. Chapters 8 and 9 showed us the heart of the minister. We got a real understanding of where our heart should be, and now we see the mind of the minister.

II. Review of Principles and the Lemon Story

You remember last week I gave you 10 great principles that I told you to write down. I kind of wove the whole sermon around these 10 things because when you start to look at yourself first, and that is where it all starts, you cannot help somebody else until you get your own self where you need to be. But when you take these 10 principles and you put them into your own life first and you understand how they affect you and you get them to work for you, then you are going to be in a much better position to help somebody else. I brought them through and I will go through them again just for the people that are visitors here so they have some continuity. But I gave those to them because there is a reason. We are going to use them as we start to come through this chapter.

1. We are simply what we think about. What we think about is what we are. I gave you two great verses: Matthew 12 and Proverbs 23. So we learned that we are what we think about.
2. The heart of the minister, the heart that you have, the attitude of heart that you have, will always produce the mind of the minister. We are what we think about.
3. Attitude versus action. That is based on your pattern of thought and it is one of the greatest Bible principles that you will ever have. I showed you how it worked.
4. Wrong patterns of thought will always produce the wrong attitude. When the wrong pattern of thought produces the wrong attitude, in time the attitude will always produce the wrong action. It just follows that basic pattern.
5. Strongholds. This is really what chapter 10 really gets to. We just talked about it to give you some aspects. Strongholds are defensive positions. When we do not want to do what is right, you see it in your kids, you get that look from them. You know what you just told them to do is not going over well. That is because they now have built a defensive position. What you told them to do was the right thing. What they were doing was the wrong thing. But because they do not want to do the right thing and they want to continue doing the wrong thing, now

we call it a wall goes up. They have got a wall up. You cannot get in. That is a defensive position. That is a stronghold in your life. That is something that you do not want to give up that you want to hang on to, and then foolishly. You see this all the time in the ministry. You see people who are absolutely standing for something that is ridiculous, that anybody with an IQ above sub-plant life would know that it is not in a Christian's life. But yet they defend it to the point where it is almost ridiculous. Why? Because it is a stronghold. A stronghold is a defensive position.

6. You cannot fix problems in your life with the same thinking that caused those problems. It goes back to the thought patterns. There is something that has to change about the way you think, which produces how you act and the actions that you have in your life.
7. When you change, you will deal with people, you will try to help people, and they will change their action, but they will never change their attitude. Change of action is always temporary. It is never lasting. Change of attitude is what it takes to change something permanently.
8. You cannot make unspiritual people spiritual by putting good people in their lives. This is a fallacy that many people fall into. I have a worthless son. I have a worthless daughter. So put people of worth in their life, and it is going to change them. No, no, no, no. You cannot change somebody from being what they want to be. They have to change their attitude before you can change their action. At that point, then, yes, you put good people with them. The other point of that is you never give unspiritual people spiritual things to do to make them think that that is going to make them spiritual. That just does not work either. There is a process. I will give you some good advice: stay out of other people's strongholds. If you know somebody is not doing what the Bible says, it is good advice just to stay out of it. Do not get involved in it, because obviously, when you get in somebody's stronghold and you become part of that, there is going to be some issues.
9. The job of every Christian is to get God's thoughts, God's opinion, on everything in life. That is what the Bible is all about. Then you make that opinion, God's opinion, your opinion. Now, that is a process. That does not happen overnight. That goes through some things that you have to work with in your life that you have to do. It takes some time to do that, but that ought to be the goal of every Christian on this planet. Once you get saved, you are saved from the world. Why would you get saved from the world but still want to think like the world? That is the problem.
10. As Christians, looking at the world, looking at the life we live and all the things around us with the Bible that God gives us, we just need to be smarter than the problems. The Bible is the book that God gives us that allows us to be smarter than the situations that we face in life. Many times in your life and my life, you are not responsible for the bad things that happen to you in life. There will be things that happen in your life that you have no control over. A lot of bad things that happen in your life you caused. But let us be honest. There are a lot of things in life that will happen to you that will befall you in life you had nothing to do with. You are not responsible always for the bad things that happen in your life, but you are responsible for how you deal with them. That comes back to being smarter than the issue, smarter than the problem.

Then I gave you three, if you remember, three great principles of the Christian life that I think are invaluable. I use them all the time.

11. We all agreed that God does have standards of holiness. There have to be some things that we do as Christians and some things that we do not do as Christians. We all came to that agreement.
12. When you start to look at a situation, you break it down to the lowest common denominator. Get it down that you are not caught up in the symptom of the problem, but you really truly understand what the problem is. That is very important.
13. The story of what do you get when you squeeze a lemon. You will use that every day of your life. It is the answer to why people who appear to be God's people, who appear to be Christian, when something befalls them in their life or something comes into their life and they fall apart or they do not follow through or they give up and quit. Many times over the years in those scenarios people have asked me, "Why does so and so do this? Why do they do that? I thought they were leaders. I thought they were this. I thought they were that. They have taught the Bible before. They have disciples. Why do people do those things?" It comes back to the lemon story.

I asked them, "What do you get when you squeeze a lemon?" Everybody thinks you get lemon juice. But the truth of the matter is, I told them the story down in the South a number of years ago where some guy was going into the supermarket and injecting with a needle into lemons some kind of poison, and the people were buying the lemons, taking them home and making lemon juice, and 30 or 40 people died. So the preacher picked up on it and he says, "What do you get when you squeeze a lemon?" And we all say lemon juice. But he says that is not true. What you get when you squeeze a lemon is really what is on the inside. What do you get when you squeeze a Christian? What you get is what is really on the inside.

The mark of you and me as a Christian, the strength of you and our testimony as a Christian, it is not when everything goes good in our life. It is when everything falls apart in our life. It is when you are squeezed. It is when I am squeezed. When a Christian gets squeezed, what is really on the inside is what comes out. That answers so many questions.

III. The Battle for the Mind: 2 Corinthians 10

With that intro I gave you last week, we are going to today begin to examine this great chapter. It is truly a great chapter that deals with the greatest battle that you are ever going to fight, and that is the battle for your mind. So I want to begin reading 2 Corinthians chapter 10. We will pick it up in the first five verses here today and we are going to continue on with why people do what they do, why people say the things that they say, and how people, why they think the way that they do. Maybe this will give you some better understanding.

2 Corinthians 10:1-5

Now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, who in presence am base among you, but being absent am bold toward you.

But I beseech you, that I may not be bold when I am present with that confidence, wherewith I think to be bold against some, which think of us as if we walked according to the flesh.

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh:

(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)

Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;

Now Father, we thank you today for the Word of God that you have given us. Thank you Father that you did not leave us in this life without a guide which shows us what you think about everything in life, the Word of God. We pray today Father that as these people sit here, and I do not know all of them. I know a lot of them, but I give everybody the benefit of the doubt. I believe that they are good people and I believe that they are here today because they are good people, and I believe that deep down inside them they all want to do what is right. They may not understand it all. They may struggle with some things in their life, but we all struggle. But I pray Father that your spirit today would take this. I do not want to preach this message today. I want to talk to them. I want to try to, like I did last week, I want to try to help them to see and understand how vitally important this battle is. Many of them are losing the battle. Many of them have got the victory in the battle, but we need to understand this battle today. We will thank you and praise you now in Jesus' name for a sake we ask it. Amen.

IV. Understanding "Walk in the Flesh" and Spiritual Weapons

The first thing I want you to see here, and for you people who are in your Bibles here, you probably need to make this note in here because it will come up at some point. I want to draw your attention to verse 3. He says in verse 3, "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh." Now that verse needs a little clarification here because if you remember back when we taught the book of Romans, Romans chapter 8 in particular, Romans chapter 8 clearly says that we as Christians cannot walk in the flesh. We cannot. We cannot walk in the flesh as Christians. An unsaved man walks in the flesh, but a Christian cannot walk in the flesh. Yet Paul says here in this passage that we can, and you can see how if somebody did not really understand the Bible, they would read Romans 8 and then they would read this and they would get confused on it.

Here is what he is talking about. In Romans chapter 8, Paul is talking about the spiritual body of the believer, and he is talking about how in Romans chapter 8 we have been separated from the flesh through salvation and now we are in a spiritual body. When you look at the body, soul, and spirit and understand what took place the day a person gets saved, in that sense a child of God has been separated from his flesh. So spiritually speaking, he cannot walk in the flesh. Now he can walk after the flesh, but he cannot walk in the flesh because he has been separated from the flesh.

Here in 2 Corinthians chapter 10, verse 3, he is not talking about our spiritual body. You have to see the difference. In Romans 8 when he says that we cannot walk in the flesh, he is talking about in a spiritual sense. He is not talking about a spiritual sense here. He is talking about our physical body. Geographically, I am still in the flesh. Look at it this way: your flesh is like a dead corpse, like a dead body. Before you were saved, you were stuck to that dead body, your flesh. The moment God saved you, he separated you from that flesh, and now you are a new creature in Christ Jesus. Where before salvation you were stuck to it, after salvation you are just stuck with it. You have to deal with it every day. It is there all the time, and God saved you, he separated from you. So verse 3 simply says, "I am geographically and physically still in my physical body, my flesh." But then the point he is trying to make in spite of that, my battle I fight is not a physical battle. I may be geographically still in this physical body, but the battle I fight is not a physical battle, it is a spiritual battle, and that is the point he is trying to make.

He says in verse 4, the next verse, "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal," there is the flesh, "but mighty through God." Now these weapons are found over in Ephesians chapter 6. If you come down through that great passage, that is the great passage on the armor of God, and there again he says:

Ephesians 6:12-13

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

What follows in that chapter is seven pieces of armor. We have talked about it many times. You can go on the website, you can get the study we did on it a number of times. But he says over there in that the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty through God. So when you go to Ephesians, you find out what that weaponry is. He talks about first of all, loins girded about with truth in Ephesians. He talks about the breastplate of righteousness. He talks about having our feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. He talks about the shield of faith. He talks about the helmet of salvation. He talks about the sword of the Spirit. And then he talks about praying always with all prayer and supplication. You see, these are the weapons that he is talking about in verse 4.

V. Defining and Overcoming Strongholds

In this chapter, as we start to come through it, what we just read, we see it is about strongholds in our lives. Now a stronghold is simply what the word says. It is something that has a strong hold on you. That is what it does. Yet if you take it through the Bible and you would examine it, you will find that even though the strongholds are your defensive position you build in your life when you refuse to surrender to God, it becomes your holdout, your hideout.

Strongholds come in two different flavors when you look at them through the Bible.

14. You have the fleshy stronghold that is just being part of the world. That would be somebody who gets prideful about things. Somebody that gets sin in their life about something that is worldly. That is where you can find that you can take and put sports in your life, where you can put your job in your life. It does not matter. It is just things that you put in your life that go contrary when they get out of, and many of them are not bad, but you get them out of priority, out of whack, and then they become a stronghold. So instead of going to church on Sunday morning or going to Bible study on Thursday night, you go play basketball or you go do this or you go do that. Those things take the place of where God wants to be in your life.
15. The second one is what we call satanic strongholds. They are much more complicated. That would be addictions. That would be sexual perversion. That would be the things that are not the natural things, that are unnatural things. That will be when you deal with somebody with drug addiction or alcohol abuse, or someone who gets to the point where they are into the dark sexual side of things: pedophiles, necromancing, and bestiality, and all the things of perversion that go along with it that are not natural. They are not the garden variety everyday sins you deal with. They are satanic in their nature. They really get a hold on you. Of course, you have ever tried to deal with somebody that is an alcoholic? You ever try to deal with somebody that is a hardline drug addict? It is a hard thing to get away. You deal with someone who has been involved in pedophilia or molesting children. The unsaved experts will tell you that that is something that a man or a woman probably never gets out of their life because it is a stronghold. It is a stronghold, and this chapter defines it for us.

This chapter is about pulling down strongholds, and you are going to find that there, we will talk about it in a minute, that there are two different aspects of these strongholds that we want to look at, but this chapter is about pulling them down. I like that phrase, "nice choice of words," because when you put a stronghold in your life, here is basically what we do. We talked about this Thursday night when somebody asked about grieving the Holy Spirit of God. Your heart is like a throne, and a king wants to sit on the throne. God wants to be that king that sits on that throne of your heart. When you and I, when we allow or build a stronghold in your life, what we simply do is take God off that throne and put something else on, and it can be anything. It can be something as minute as I said earlier, sports. It could be something as easy as your job. You all have to have one, but it can become an obsession in your life where your career and making money override whatever God wants you to do. It can be your boyfriend or your girlfriend. It could be the desire to have a boyfriend or a girlfriend.

On the other side, you can get to the place where, instead of God sitting on that throne of your life and getting stronger every day, whatever you put on your life gets stronger every day. That is why teenagers start out smoking cigarettes, wind up doing crack. That is why they start out drinking a beer, hiding it, and wind up being an alcoholic. Strongholds get stronger every day. They do not go away out of your life. When you put whatever you put on the throne of your heart, that is what is going to get stronger every day. When you put God on the throne of your life, then you are going to become stronger for Him every day. When you put something else on the throne of your life, it is going to become stronger every day. People with strongholds get worse, they do not get better, they simply do not. The stronghold sits on the throne and it gets stronger every day, and that stronghold needs to be, as the Bible says, "pulled down."

I love that choice of word. When I read that, my mind goes back to the Gulf War when we went over there and fought Saddam Hussein and his crowd back in 2003. If you remember, after we took Baghdad, after the war was over, Saddam Hussein had set himself up as a god. He loved Adolf Hitler. He worshipped Nimrod. In fact, in the Bible, Babylon, when Nimrod was his Baghdad, he thought he was Nimrod reincarnated. So he presented himself as all dictators, like some kind of god. Whenever you went through it, you saw gigantic pictures of Saddam Hussein. In the square there in the middle of the city, they had that humongous statue of him standing up there looking like a real leader, looking defiant, looking like he was going to lead the people, strong, courageous. I mean, it must have been 40 feet tall on a big high pedestal. After the war was over, one of the news agencies took the film and the picture how that the people that really hated him, once they were free, you know what they did? The picture was beautiful. It showed his statue up there with about 30 ropes around his neck and tied to bumpers of cars and people pulling on him. You know what they did? They pulled that statue right off that pedestal. I have thought to myself many, many times, that is what we need to do with strongholds. You put a rope around a sucker's neck and you pull it off the throne. You get it off there and put Christ back on it.

In 2 Samuel chapter 5, we are not going to get into it today, but in 2 Samuel chapter 5, just to kind of show you understand this, that whole chapter is dedicated in the life of story of David taking Jerusalem of five things that you do to get a stronghold out of your life. It is a tremendous chapter, but strongholds need to be pulled down.

VI. The Pastor's Role in Pulling Down Strongholds

When we look at strongholds in our lives, we are going to forget the deep dark satanic one because most of you do not have a problem with that. I want to focus on the one we all struggle with the most, and there are two aspects to that in the passage, and you can read it. The first one is imagination, and the second one is every high thing that exalted itself against the knowledge of God. When you exalt something in our lives over God, it becomes a stronghold.

Let us look at these for a moment and let us get some light on it from the Bible. Let us talk about imagination first. I do not know if you know this or not, but the first time the word imagination shows up in the Bible, it shows up in Genesis chapter 6, and it shows up in Genesis chapter 6, verse 5, with a man named Noah. Remember that in Noah's time, the world was totally against God, even though they had a religious era about them and they talked about God, in truth they denied every truth about God. They were a very religious society, but they were not God's religion, they were their own religion.

Genesis 6:5

And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

See that thing? Now that is a stronghold, and the truth of the matter is, that is a picture right there, that is a picture of modern-day America right there. That is exactly what it is. God looked

down and he saw a world where that the imagination of every man, outside of Noah and his family, was against God.

The next time you find it, it says Genesis chapter 11, just a couple chapters over, and this will be the Tower of Babel. Babel is Babylon. Babylon means confusion, and this is where God changed the language, and so they do not talk one language anymore, they all babble, so it is the Tower of Babel.

Genesis 11:6

And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do.

You see, it was the imagination, it is where it starts. Sin always starts in the mind and goes to the heart and then produces an attitude and then comes out on the other side as an action. The first thing he says it is a stronghold in people's lives is an imagination. When we start coming through the Bible, we do not find it in a good sense. Once Israel gets started a little bit later on, you are going to find through the book of Jeremiah. Eight times in the book of Jeremiah he uses the phrase about the nation of Israel, "after their imagination of their evil heart."

Then you go to the end of Israel. Turn with me in your Bible to Ezekiel chapter 8. I want to show you a great, great, great picture of our imagination. I want you to better understand why this is such a problem. Ezekiel is the book of the captivity. You remember from our New Year's Eve study in 721, Sennacherib comes down and takes the northern tribes from Assyria into captivity a little bit later on, around 606 BC. Nebuchadnezzar comes down and takes the two southern tribes, and Ezekiel writes during the southern captivity. He goes down there during that Babylonian captivity.

He writes this in Ezekiel chapter 8. We will pick it up in verse 5. Now watch this. This is incredible stuff. If you do not have, if you are in a people ministry or you work with people, you need to get this to see this.

Ezekiel 8:5-12

Then said he unto me, Son of man, lift up thine eyes now the way toward the north. So I lifted up mine eyes the way toward the north, and behold northward at the gate of the altar this image of jealousy in the entry.

He said furthermore unto me, Son of man, seest thou what they do? even the great abominations that the house of Israel committeth here, that I should go far off from my sanctuary? but turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations.

And he brought me to the door of the court; and when I looked, behold a hole in the wall.

Then said he unto me, Son of man, dig now in the wall: and when I had digged in the wall, behold a door.

And he said unto me, Go in, and behold the wicked abominations that they do here.

So I went in and saw; and behold every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel, poured upon the wall round about.

And there stood before them seventy men of the ancients of the house of Israel, and in the midst of them stood Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan, with every man his censer in his hand; and a thick cloud of incense went up.

Then said he unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chambers of his imagery? for they say, The LORD seeth us not; the LORD hath forsaken the earth.

That is a picture of our minds. Those images portrayed across the wall in a dark room that nobody sees, that is what we think about, and I wanted you to see that. He said the wicked things that they do outwardly, and then he says, "I am going to show you some really wicked things." Do you know what that proves? It proves that what we have on the inside of our imagination is much worse than what we see on the outside of what somebody does. That is a great principle. That is an incredible principle.

Ezekiel 8:10 and Ezekiel 8:12 says the images portrayed on a wall in a dark room, the beast, the idolatry, the abominable things. Ezekiel 8:12 says this whole story is a picture of what Israel's imagination is, and then it talks about the chambers of their imagery. Then it talks about, and see this, Ezekiel 8:11, "every man with a censer in his hand." He talks about Jaazaniah and Shaphan and the 70 elders of Israel. Do you know who they were? Mark in your Bible Numbers chapter 11, verse 16, and Exodus chapter 20, verse 11. Those are the guys that Moses left at the bottom of the mountain when he went up to get the law back in Exodus, and while he was gone, they took and made the golden calf and let all Israel go a whoring after the other gods. That is who they are. They are the religious leaders of Israel. What a mess this thing is. You know where it starts? You know where the biggest mess you have right now this morning? Our imagination. Your imagination, what you think about, is what you are, and your imagination will always lead you into trouble.

Proverbs chapter 6, verse 16: "Six things that God hates." What is number four? Number four is "a heart that devises wicked imaginations." That is number four. Matthew chapter 5, verse 28, a famous verse: "Whosoever looketh after a woman to lust after her hath already committed adultery in his heart." I know what the verse says. I know the principle applies, but let me say it one step further. You know why that verse says what it says? And I know what everybody says, "If you look after a woman and you lust after her, you committed adultery in his heart." But it goes farther than that. It is based on the principle of attitude and action. What he is saying there is if you think about committing adultery long enough and what it will be like, your mind will go there and your body will follow and you will do it after a period of time. That is what he is saying. We all take our minds places we would never think of taking our bodies. Imagination. Imagine that. Imagination.

The second thing here, "and every high thing that exalted itself against the knowledge of God." Look at that, "the knowledge of God." That is not knowledge about God, that is God's knowledge. That is His mind. That is Philippians 2:5 that I gave you last week and 1 Corinthians

2:15. That is the Bible itself. When we put education or science or philosophy or your will or something that you want to do, it can be many things, over God's mind, it becomes a stronghold.

VII. The Weakness of Strongholds and Samson's Example

Let me say this, I have dealt with people for 40 years. I have made people my life study. I have to because I cannot give them bad advice. I have worked my whole life of understanding why people do what they do, say what they say, and think the way they think. I have watched every pattern of human nature, cataloged it, and I will give it to some of you in time as we come through and learning about people. But I want you to understand this today, people. You want to understand people, here it comes: people who allow strongholds in their lives are basically weak people. They are weak people. That is their pattern. They are weak to the point that they never can be a leader, but they are always a follower. They will decide they are going to do something on Tuesday, and somebody will talk them out of it by Wednesday. They go with whatever the flow is. They are weak. They are weak to the point that they cannot build anything in their life that is worth anything for God. When they get out of fellowship with God, the best thing they can build is the worst thing they build is strongholds. They always change only the action because they are weak, and they are too weak to really address the problem, which is their attitude.

They are like a little lizard I had a long time ago. I remember this like it was yesterday. F.W. Woolworths downtown Canton, Ohio. They had these little lizards for sale for 50 cents, and my mom bought me one. My dad made a nice cage about that high, had a door on it. He went out and cut a tree limb off and put it, stuck it in the middle so the lizard would have something to climb on. I would go out and catch flies and put them down on the top, and I would be fascinated. There are two things that fascinated me as a kid growing up. One of them was that lizard because he would sit there and that fly would come, and I would put him raw hamburger down, would draw the fly down on a hamburger, and he just sat there, and he was so fast, and he would make a little snapping sound when he got those flies. My second thing in life, and this is the reason why I am who I am, this has caused social scars on me forever, but I used to love to watch those electric bug lights. You get the little ones that just go in and they are gone, but then you get a big one in there, and that sucker will fry for two or three seconds. I mean, I love to go to sleep and have my window open with the sound of bugs frying out there in the yard. I know, I know, it is me. You know what, you have got your problems, I have got mine.

But so many of God's people remind me of that little lizard. It was a chameleon. That is what the name of it was. I had to go around a circle a couple of times to remember the name of it. You know what a chameleon does? That little lizard had the ability to change colors. I mean, you want to go out and hunt deer or turkey or whatever, you have to put on a camouflage suit. He just thinks green and he turns green. He thinks brown, then he turns brown. When he would be on the branch of the tree, he would be brown. He would go up and get into the leaves, he turned green. In other words, that little sucker could change colors with whatever the circumstances was. I look at a lot of God's people and I think, just like my little lizard, you change with whatever way the wind is blowing. Whoever is leading today is what you follow. I mean, it is incredible. I

mean, you are weak. If brains was gunpowder, you would not have enough to blow your nose. I mean, you follow everything, you follow everybody. I have always thought of that when I look at some Christians about that little lizard.

Now, in all of this, some of you someday are going to make good preachers. Some of you are going to make good pastors. You really are. I see it in you. So I want to tell you this, in all of what we are talking about, here is the job of a pastor. It is a nasty job. Maybe you will appreciate me a little more when you see what horrific situation God has put me in with you. I mean, I have heard over the last four or five years so many times people who get into sin in their life and they are always blaming it on somebody else. It is incredible. I mean, it will be, "Well, so and so does it, so I am doing this, so that." If you want to know what is wrong with me this morning, and I am not this ogre that you think I am this morning standing up here, and I am mellow today normally, and I always know who sits on the front row because I know, and I always tell them ahead of time to wear a raincoat because when I get going, I can spit on the front row real easy. But I told them, "No raincoats today, I am not spitting today." But I am going to tell you, I am the way I learned. I have seen everybody else blame the way they are on everybody else, so I am the way I am because of you. Your sin makes me the way I am. Makes me crazy. It is not me. This is not the real me. Ask my wife, ask my kids, come over and talk to my dog. Their birthday was this week, one year old. We had a party all day on Wednesday. We sang songs. I gave them treats. It was a wonderful day. I am sure if you were a psychologist this morning and you dug down in my past, there would be a connection between my dogs and that little lizard.

Here is my job. Turn over to Jeremiah chapter 1. You have to see this in a context of what we are talking about. I mean, it is a terrible situation I find myself in, but I look at you and I see some of you are going to make great preachers. Some of you are already great preachers. Some of you already are, I would think, would be good pastors. You would have what I think you look for, but I am telling you this is the test right here.

Jeremiah 1:4-10

Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.

Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child.

But the LORD said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak.

Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the LORD.

Then the LORD put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth.

See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant.

That is the job because I want to break this thing down in two things because I want you to see this. First of all, understand who Jeremiah was. God sent him to Israel, and God sent him to Israel because Israel had ceased to do what God wanted him to do. So he sends prophets. Jeremiah is just one of them. He sends prophets down there, and those prophets are really let them have it. The prophets are God's prophets to a people who have turned their back to God and built a stronghold in their life.

When you go over to Jeremiah chapter 17, here is where the connection comes in. Jeremiah 17:16 he clearly tells you that Jeremiah is their pastor. So all the connections are here. God sent Jeremiah to his people who had turned their back on God and got away from God, and God takes you as a pastor and or a preacher and sends you to his people in the New Testament who have turned their back against God. You see how it works? It is simple. It really is. Israel had put a stronghold in their life. Many people today put strongholds in their life.

Now I am going to give you the rules of being a pastor. You want to get these down. If you are not going to be a pastor, then do not worry about it, but if you are going to be, then get them down.

16. Recognize as a pastor or a preacher, you have nothing to say. My opinion about things in life is just as worthless as yours. The only thing I have to say to you is what God wants me to say to you. I have convictions about things. There are things that I will not do, places I will not go. I never preach those convictions. You know why? Because they are my convictions, and a lot of pastors will get up and try to enforce their convictions on other people. I never do that. Those are my opinion based on my relationship with God. You have to form your own convictions. But what I will do is preach to you the word of God that God gave me. I will leave my personal anecdotes out of it. My personal opinion on it does not matter. It is just as worthless as yours. So the first thing you want to recognize in the first rule of pastoring or preaching is we have nothing to say unless God gives you what he wants you to say. A lot of pastors get caught up in that. A lot of pastors every Sunday morning they keep on talking long after there is nothing left to be said, and that is the way it works.

17. This is verse 7. You preach where God commands you to go and you say what he commanded you to say. I was born and raised in Ohio, and God commanded me to come to Kansas City over 30 some years ago, and I came here 30 some years ago because that is where God told me to come. I obeyed him in that. My job, your job, our job is to say what he commands you to say. This Bible here, this is not the normal one, but Joe has been stealing all my sermons out of my old preaching Bibles. This is the Bible that I really do not use anymore, and you can see it scarred, beat to pieces. When I was on a preaching circuit years ago, preaching revivals and going around the country, this was my deal, and I wanted to keep myself honest. My favorite verse in the Bible on preaching is 1 Kings 22:14.

1 Kings 22:14

And Micaiah said, As the LORD liveth, what the LORD saith unto me, that will I speak.

I had that in bold in front of my Bible because I wanted to make sure that wherever I went and wherever I got an opportunity to preach, that I gave them what God gave me. Now the story

about that, and I think it is worth taking a quick look at here, the story about that is back here in 1 Kings 22, and it is a great story, and one of my favorite stories in the Bible, and it is a story where Micaiah is the prophet, just like Jeremiah was, and Micaiah lives in a time when Ahab, who was the wickedest king that ever lived, hated him. What Ahab has done is what we all do. Ahab wanted nothing to do with God. This is an incredible story. It is such a great parallel to so many of our lives. Ahab wanted nothing to do with God, but he wanted to pretend he was religious. So you know what he did? He got him 400 prophets that he surrounded him that would tell him what he wanted to hear, just like so many of us want to do something God's word says that is not what to do, so we go around and take the popular opinion poll. We look for some sign in the sky that this is what God wants us to do when God has clearly told us this is not what he wants us to do, and this is what Ahab does. But it is hilarious because it says down here after he gets the 400 men in 1 Kings 22:6, and he says, "Should we go up to this battle?" All 400 of them, all 400 of them says, "Oh yes, king, go up to the battle. The Lord is with you. The Lord is with you." All 400 of them. After he leaves that meeting, he comes over and he says to Jehoshaphat, he says, "Is there yet anybody else who will tell me?" And Jehoshaphat says, "Yeah, there is one. There is one guy left." And he says, "Oh yeah, his name is Micaiah." And he said, "That is right." And he busts out in that verse, he says, "And I hate him." Why? "Because he prophesied no good thing concerning me." So they call Micaiah, and when they call Micaiah in, the people before he goes into Ahab, they says, "Now look," oh, and have I ever been in these situations, "Now look, you are going to go in and tell him what the Bible says. Do not tell him anything negative. He wants to hear it. It is okay to go down. 400 other people have said it is okay. Come along, get on the band, be part of us. We are all Kumbaya. Let us all hold hands, get the weenies and the marshmallows. It is Kumbaya anyway." And he comes on in there, and so you know what Micaiah does? He goes in, he plays the game. He goes in, and Ahab says, "Well, should I go to battle or should I not?" And Ahab says, "No, king, you go up the battle. God is with you. Praise the Lord. It is going to be a great time." You know what Ahab says? And this is great. Ahab looked and he said, "I told you, I told you, I told you, you would not tell me the truth." Ahab already knew it was wrong to do it. He had 400 people that sided with him, and when Micaiah came in and told him what the other 400 told him, he gets mad at Micaiah because he knows Micaiah did not tell him what the truth is. Then my favorite verse, 1 Kings 22:14, and Micaiah said, "As the Lord liveth, what the Lord sayeth unto me, that will I speak." You know what? You have to go where God calls you to go, and you have to say what God tells you to say. I will tell you what, you are going to find people all your life that put pressure or they will come to the point where they will be so focused on what they want to do and where they want to go. You know what happened in this book? You know what happens when God tells you in the word what not to do, and then you go ahead and finagle to do it anyhow? You know what happens? The end of the book, and I do not have time to go all the way through it, you know what he got? He got a lying spirit. Ahab got a lying spirit. A lot of Christians walk around with a lying spirit. When God tells you what is right to do, and then you go ahead and do your own thing and try to justify why you are doing it, you have a lying spirit from the Lord.

18. The pastor's job: you go where God has called you to go, and you preach what God has given you to preach. That is what you do. He says in verse 8, "Do not be afraid of their faces." In the ministry as being a pastor, people will try to intimidate you. All my life I went to places

to preach. I went to some place to preach, and some old lady, a lady, came up to me before I preached, and she knew my stand on the Bible, and she would come up to me, she said, "We are so glad you are here, Brother Alexander. We are just so glad you are here, but you know what? We are all getting along here. We all love the Lord. We are all just one, you know, one body. We are all one big family, and there is no use to divide anything, so I hope your message today will not be a dividing message." I know what she is saying. You know what I preach? When I get in that pulpit, whatever I had, I throw out, and I will preach the message that will divide because that just told me that that is what they need. You picked the wrong guy to try to intimidate. I have had people, I mean, I am a nice guy and I am a fair guy, but something just makes me crazy. I have had people come into churches all my life and try to intimidate, I try to take over and run the church. I have had women come in and try to think they are going to run the church. They do not stay around very long. I mean, there may be some, you may push your husband around and lead him around with a dog collar, but it will be different when you come here. I do not intimidate easily. You know why? I am not afraid of the faces. You know what my problem is? My problem is simple: I am much more terrified of God than I am of you. It is my problem.

19. God will put his words in your mouth. I think that is the greatest concept of everything. When a man loves God, loves the Book, and God loves him, when you stand in that pulpit, you decide you are going to be a pastor, you are going to give your life to God, or you are going to be a preacher, I guarantee you right out of the chute, brother, God will put the words in your mouth. You just have to have the courage to say them.

Now when those, those are the four rules, here are the four results. We are not done yet. When you have the four rules of preaching down, then you go to work, and here it comes, Jeremiah 1:10: "See, I have this day set thee over nations and over kingdoms to root out." You know what the job of pastor is on Sunday morning? Rooting in your life. Some of your teenagers do not like when you keep them honest by going through their room and rooting around their drawers, under the bed. I will not say anymore because I do not want to give away my hiding positions when I was a kid growing up that your kid can use them against you. They do not like you. How many times, "Stay out of my room! That is none of your business!" In other words, what they are saying is, "Do not root through my stuff." A lot of God's people are that way. They want to come to church on Sunday morning, but they do not want the preacher rooting through their stuff. Well, I am rooting. What is his job? Root out. There are a lot of parallels between me and a Roto-Rooter man. You ever have the Roto-Rooter man come? Our old house, we used to have him twice a year. We had trees in all my backyards, and he would run that big old snake down there, and he would pull that thing out. It would be just wound and wound and wound around with a big pile of roots that kept everything from going down. There are a lot of parallels between you as a preacher and a pastor and a Roto-Rooter man because you go do a lot of rooting, and you both get the same result when you pull the thing out. If you want a verse that goes along with that, it is Hebrews chapter 12, verse 15, "root of bitterness." You have to get, you have to root some things.

Then the second thing he says is "to destroy." That will be Joshua chapter 7, verse 12, and that is the story of Achan. The story of Achan is a picture of every Christian who wants to pretend they

are a Christian on the outside, but Achan, boy, he did what God told him not to do. He stole some stuff, and then he went back to his place and he dug out the tent floor, and he put it in there, and he covered it all over, and then he walked out and pretended like he would. In other words, it is a picture of God's people who have things in their life that they want to hide that may be the preacher or the pastor knows nothing about, but the Holy Spirit knows it about. So he gets the Roto-Rooter man, and he roots around in your life on Sunday morning, on Thursday night, or whenever you get into the word of God, and the Holy Spirit of God comes after you, and the bottom line is that so you will destroy the accursed thing in your life like Achan. That is what it is.

Then he says the third, and this is where we are at today, this is why I am telling you this story, he says "throw down." That is casting down imaginations, 2 Corinthians chapter 10, verse 5. Then the fourth thing is "pull down." That is the strongholds in your life. See, that is what preaching does. When you get a man in the word of God who will stand for that Book and will not be afraid of their faces and put the word of God out because that is what God has called him to do and not be intimidated by anybody and hold the line to everybody, when that guy gets up to that pulpit and preaches, when you become a pastor someday, that is what you will do. God will use you. He will put the words in your mouth, and it will be for one purpose: to root out, for one purpose to destroy, for one purpose to throw down, and to pull down. And then when you get that done in your life, read the last part of the verse, then you plant and you build. Shall it work?

You know, I stop and think about that, that is almost exactly where most of you have come from in your life here this morning. Almost all of you. All of you. You have to get some things out of your life before anybody can take you and plant and build. That is what Jeremiah was sent to do. God sent Jeremiah, and they hated him, and God will call you to be a pastor and do the same thing, and people will hate you. They hated his word so much in Jeremiah chapter 36, they burnt him up. They hated him so much for what he said in Jeremiah chapter 37, they threw him in jail. And they hated him so much because of the message that he preached in Jeremiah chapter 38, they put ropes under his arms and lowered him down into a dung pit. God's man. In the New Testament, God will send you with Jeremiah to stand before you and preach to a people who have lost God and leeway with God, and to tell you the truth and preach the truth to you so you will look to yourself and root out and destroy and throw down and pull down the strongholds in your life. Some of you do, some of you do not. Some of you sit here this morning and you sing the famous song, "Count your blessings, name them one by one. Count your blessings, see what God has done. Count your blessings, name them one by one." Some of you do not. Show me instead of counting your blessings, you are counting your sandbags. Count your sandbags, name them one by one. Count your sandbags, see what you have done. Count your sandbags, name them one by one. Arrogance, pride, stupidity. "Oh, look what I have done." That is the way it works.

Last week I gave you two great verses: Philippians 2:5, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus," and 1 Corinthians 2:15, "We have the mind of Christ."

VIII. Bringing Every Thought into Captivity

Now turn back to Ephesians chapter 6. I want to show you another verse that goes along through that. We now see that you get the strongholds pulled down and imagination fixed by the Jeremiah God has put in your life. You break those things up, you bust those things, you pull them down. Now look at this.

Ephesians 6:10-14

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;

See that thing down through there? Now look at Ephesians 6:13, look at Ephesians 6:14. The Christian's job is to stand. See that thing? It drives me crazy as I live in a world of cowardly, weak Christians who could not stand for anything. That verse says four times, "stand, stand, stand, having done all to stand, take your stand." See, weak people never stand for anything. Weak people who allow strongholds in their life cannot stand for anything. You know why? Because they are weak, and they cannot stand for anything because they fall for everything. It is not hard, and you can mark them, you can see them.

Now look at the first thing he says. He lays out the seven pieces of armor. He says, "Stand therefore, having your loins girded about with truth." That truth is the word of God. Now why loins for a man to stand? Because a man's strength is in his loins, his hips, and his legs. Just as in life a man's physical strength is in his loins in sports and all things that he does, the Bible talks about your family before it is ever born, it talks about coming out of a man's loins. That is his strength. He tells us in his spiritual life, our ability to stand for God will be in our loins girded about, that is wrapped up with truth.

Now turn over to 1 Peter chapter 1 and pick it up in verse 11, and I will show you how this thing plays itself out. Loins girded about with truth, the battle for your mind, root out, pull out imaginations, every exalted thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God. Here we go.

1 Peter 1:11-16

Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.

Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.

Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance:

But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;

Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.

Man's strength is in his mind. That is the loins that he shall gird about with truth. 1 Peter 1:13 says, "loins gird up the loins of your mind." That is your mind. The word of God. 1 Peter 1:14 says, "as obedient children," you follow what God says. 1 Peter 1:14 says, "not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts," that is not going back to the old things that you did as an unsaved person. Then he says, "But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation." The standards of holiness that God has, and you can justify it, blame it on anybody you want, do whatever you want to do, say what you say, at the end of the day it is our choice because it is written, "Be ye holy; for I am holy."

In this old world, the battle is for your mind, and every person in this room today will take a stand. You either take a stand for God or you will take a stand in your stronghold, but you will take one. When your mind is of this world, that mind will produce the attitude that produces the action of the world. When you get God's mind through the word of God in that mindset, you produce the right thought pattern. You think like God, and you now have the ability to develop the right attitude that in time will bring about the right action in your life. That is the fulfillment of the last verse, 2 Corinthians chapter 10, verse 5: "And bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." There it is. What a novel idea, captive thought process. What a novel idea.

How do you start bringing your thoughts into captivity? I understand totally that it is a process. I do understand that, but it is an incredible process. I will tell you how you start. You start by making it easy, not harder. You simply start by keeping the things, the people, the places, the books, the TVs, the shows, the movies out of your mind who bring in those ideas and thoughts that develop that mindset.

Most of you probably have never been to Europe, but Europe is completely amoral, absolutely no morals whatsoever. I told you a while back that there is legislation in Europe right now because it is kind of a common thing there. There is legislation within Europe right now to allow, make it legal to have people to have sex with animals, bestiality. That is on the books. They want to change that. No matter where you go in Europe, you see the depravity of man because the word of God has been gone now for several hundred years, and it is an incredible mess. Every country has its own mess. We think in New Orleans, you know, when the mess down there. Let me tell you something, New Orleans looked like a Sunday school class compared to some of the places in Europe. In Italy, in Rome, it is Pig Alley. In England, it is Piccadilly Circus or Circle. In Amsterdam, they have the infamous red light district where you can actually walk down in 28 blocks of brothels where the women sit in the windows and display. It is incredible what goes on. You can go down there, and we took tours down there of all of Amsterdam, and we did Europe,

and we take people down through there to get them to see what it was like, and there will be places down there where they have live sex acts of men and women on the stage, and the line is lined up all the way down the street. Yet if I would say to some of you this morning or suggest that we all go to Amsterdam and take our families and go to one of those, you would have a heart attack. Yet, I show you how stupid people are, you allow those same things to come into your home through the TV set, through the movies you watch, and your kids sit right there in the middle of it, and you think there is a difference. Crazy. It is crazy. That is how messed up people are. That is why you have the problems you have. Your kids are going to have problems they have now.

The first thing you do is remove whoever, remove whatever, remove wherever you go or have in your life that brings with it the bad thought patterns contrary to God's word. You pull down that stronghold off the throne of God and you make Christ the Lord of your life and set him up on the throne. It is as simple as that. That is where you start. You may not be able to fix it all in one day or one week or one month or six months, but you start with what you can fix, and that is taking the things out of your life that do not add to the thought process that is conducive to Christianity, and you take the people out. If you have people who are a detriment to your spiritual growth, get them out. If you have things that are a detriment, get them out. It is that simple. You are alone in control of your mind, and most people just cannot do that today. They cannot do it because they cannot get rid of that stronghold because they are weak. They are cowardly when it comes to the things in their life. Oh, they are big tough guys out on the ball field or they will dribble the ball down and take the shot and they will brag about how great they are, but when it comes to standing for God, they fold up like a broken accordion. Out of control flesh will always be by another controlled mind, and the problem today is the fact that that kind of lifestyle Christianity is accepted. It is accepted today that it is just, we have lost everything. We have lost everything. Christianity today has totally lost their minds, and the mind that they lost is the word of God, God's mind for a Christian. It is never proper to say you are out of your mind. On the contrary, you are in your mind, the flesh. It is God's mind that you are out of, and that is the problem.

You ever notice how many characters in the Bible never bothered to pull down the lifestyle, the stronghold in their life?

- Cain was faced with a stronghold. You know what his answer was? He left the presence of the Lord.
- Lot was faced with it. You know what he did? He headed to Sodom.
- Lot's wife was faced with it. She headed to a pillar of salt.
- Ishmael was faced with it. He had his shot. He became Israel's enemy.
- Esau had the same deal. He became Israel's enemy.
- Ahab had a chance, the wickedest king ever had, but he would not listen to Micaiah.
- Jephthah back there in Judges, the father who killed his own daughter. He had a shot, but his own pride would not let him do it. He killed his daughter, just like some of you are killing your kids right now, but nobody is going to help you.
- Achan, the accursed thing.

The Bible is filled with them and how they ended up, but I think the greatest example for all of us today, and I am closing with this, is Samson. Samson had a stronghold in his life. He had a couple of strongholds in his life. He is a he-man with a she-weakness. He is a tough guy. He is like a lot of guys you see today, tough guy. I have been on the basketball court, he could just take that ball down and he was something else. I bet on the baseball field, a football field, all that thing, he was something else. He was a man's man. He was a coward. He was weak. His strongholds in his life was his love for the Philistines. He loved the Philistines. Philistines type of the world. He found his first words out of his mouth in the Bible to his own parents, "I saw a woman, go get her for me." I mean, his own life, he hung out with the Philistines, a picture of the world. They were his buddies. He did everything with them.

At the end of his life, he pulled down the stronghold of his life. You ever see it? God gave him his strength to serve God, and he gave that to Delilah. Delilah took it from him. So then the Philistines, his buddies, the world system, just like so many of God's people love that world system, the world system, the Philistines, his friends, at the end they took him. They stripped him naked. They put out his eyes, and they chained him to a grinding wheel, and he went around in a circle for God knows how many months. The child of God, the aristocracy of heaven, taken by the Philistine, blinded. Now he is grinding for them naked while they make sport and laugh at him. That is what the world does to you.

Samson came to his senses too little, too late, afraid, but he finally came to his senses, but by that time he was chained between the pillars of the great temple of the Philistines. In other words, he was chained to his stronghold. He finally gets with God, and God says, "Well, you are in a mess, are not you?" And he says, "Yes, Lord, I am." He says, "Boy, you know what? I saved you. I called you to do a job, and look where you are at. You are a disgrace, Samson." He says, "Lord, I know it." He says, "Man, you have given your whole life to harlots. You have given your life to everything, and now you know what? You have never learned the principles that that that is going to be preached down the line, that what the Philistines do to you, what the world does to you, what the sins does to you, it is a common thing. Strongholds in your life, they blind you, so they put out his eyes. They bind you, so they tied up his hands, and they grind you. They bring you to an end of your life." And there he is, the child of God, chained between two pillars of the Philistine that he partied with, that he loved, and all the things that he did.

Now God says, "It is time to pull down that stronghold." Oh, God gave him strength. He felt that power come back, and he reached around them two pillars, and he began to crack that. Well, they laughed and made fun, and he looked out there at the people he partied with and all the women he had been with, and he wrapped his around that, and all the beer and all the dope and all the stuff that he drank, and he pulled those things, and those arms got the power of God back in him, and he pulled those two central pillars out, and his stronghold came crumbling down, but he died in the process of suicide. God will bring your stronghold to an end. You get to choose how.

Chapter 10 of 2 Corinthians deals with the mind of the minister. That mind has to be one mind with God's mind, taking the Bible and learning its principles, devouring its concepts, embracing its truth, seeing and grasping how God views everything and everybody on planet Earth, and in making that your mindset, the pattern for your thinking, bringing every thought into captivity

under the obedience of Christ, casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalted itself against the word of God, listening to the Jeremiahs that God has put in your life who tell you, who root in your life, who destroy in your life, and bring those things that you might get those things out of your life, that though your life can then be fulfilled by God by getting planted in the word of God and growing and being built. You pull down those strongholds in your life by rooting up, by destroying, by casting down, and pulling down, taking the things of this old world off your throne of your heart and putting the Lord back where he needs to be.