



Key Scripture: “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds... bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.” — 2 Corinthians 10:3–5

The battle every believer faces is fought in the mind. Strongholds fall by God’s power, and thoughts are brought under Christ’s authority through daily faith, obedience, Scripture, worship, and dependence on the Holy Spirit.

1. Know Where the Battle Is

The war is not primarily against people, circumstances, critics, or culture. It is fought in the realm of thoughts, reasoning, imagination, and the beliefs we allow to shape our view of God, ourselves, and others.

2. Tear Down Trusted Strongholds

A stronghold is a fortified lie we have trusted so long that it feels like truth: “God could never forgive that,” “I’ll always be this way,” or “The end justifies the means.” These walls do not fall through willpower alone, but through God’s power released by faith-filled obedience.

3. Take Every Thought Captive Daily

Strongholds may fall decisively, but taking thoughts captive is a moment-by-moment discipline. The goal is not merely to silence a wrong thought, but to replace it with truth from God’s Word and submit it to the obedience of Christ.

Practice This Week: Name • Test • Arrest • Replace • Submit

1. Name it: **Identify exactly what the thought is claiming.**
2. Test it: Ask, “**Is this true according to Scripture?**”
3. Arrest it: **Refuse to rehearse or negotiate with the lie.**
4. Replace it: **Speak a specific Scripture out loud.**
5. Submit it: **Ask whether this thought leads you closer to Christ or away from Him.**

When the thought says...	Answer with God’s truth...
“I am a failure.”	Romans 8:1 — There is no condemnation in Christ.
“Everything may go wrong.”	Philippians 4:6–7 — Pray, give thanks, and receive God’s peace.
“I have nothing to offer.”	Ephesians 2:10 - You are God’s workmanship, created for good works.
“I am alone.”	Hebrews 13:5 - He will never leave or forsake you.

Reflect: What stronghold have I trusted longer than I have trusted God? What thought needs to be brought captive today?

Pray: Lord, search my heart, expose every lie, teach me to stand on Your Word, and guard my mind with Your peace in Jesus’ name. Amen.

TAKING THE HIGH GROUND

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Last week, we defined and delineated the difference between having the indwelling of the Holy Spirit through faith in Christ and allowing ourselves to be continually filled with that same Spirit to produce fruit to the glory of God.

Today we are going to consider the Apostle Paul's letter to the Corinthian church especially the scriptures 2 Corinthians 10 verses 3 through 5.

We are going to learn today how to tear down the strongholds that the world has imprinted on us and take captive the thoughts that reverberate through our lives that keep us from a healthy relationship with God in Christ and with each other.

Every one of us is a combat veteran, whether we have ever worn a uniform or not.

The battlefield is not overseas. It is not even in this room.

It is six inches wide, between your two ears, and it never closes for the night.

Every believer is engaged in a war that cannot be seen with the natural eye.

It is not fought with fists, swords, guns, or political power.

It is fought in the realm of the mind—your thoughts, your reasoning, your imagination, your interpretations of reality.

Paul is writing to a church under siege — not by an army, but by an idea.

False teachers had come into Corinth trading on polish, credentials, and clever rhetoric, and they had convinced part of the congregation that Paul was weak, unimpressive, and worse, that he was not a 'real' apostle.

Part of their argument was that because Paul was not wealthy or particularly eloquent and had no social status to speak of, that he did not have God's favor and so could not have been sent by God.

Paul's answer is startling.

He does not defend himself with better rhetoric.

He tells them plainly: this was never a battle of wit against wit.

He tells his flock, and us today, that there is a war going on, and its weapons are not the ones the world hands out.

We are going to go through a lot of scripture today, but our foundation is this one.

2 Corinthians 10:3-5

3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh.

4 For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds,

5 casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,

Before Paul tells us what to do, he reminds us who we are.

'We do not war according to the flesh.'

This is the first correction most of us need, because our instinct is always to fight flesh-and-blood battles —

to win the argument, silence the critic, fix the circumstance, control the person.

But Paul says plainly: that is neither where nor how this war is being fought.

2 Corinthians 10:4

For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds,

This is military language, and Paul means it to be.

The Greek word he uses for “stronghold” here is *ochyroma* — a fortified place, a garrison, a walled position built to withstand siege.

Paul is telling the Corinthians — and telling us — that the human mind can become exactly that:

a fortress built out of reasoning, built brick by brick out of thoughts that have been believed so long and so often that they now feel like bedrock truth, when in fact they are simply lies with excellent architecture.

So how can we approach the demolition of these strongholds with confidence?

Paul's readers already had a frame of reference for this in the scriptures.

Centuries earlier, King Jehoshaphat stood before three invading armies with no natural chance of survival, and the word of the Lord came to him:

2 Chronicles 20:15b, 17a

"...Do not be afraid nor dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours, but God's..."

"You will not need to fight in this battle. Position yourselves, stand still and see the salvation of the Lord..."

I like that the Lord said for them to “stand still”. This speaks to me of waiting on the Lord in faith and trust.

Jehoshaphat's army marched out singing psalms and hymns of praise before they ever had to draw a sword— because the battle belonged to God.

That is exactly the point in verse 4 of Paul’s exhortation, **'the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God.'**

Underline that phrase.

Not mighty in your willpower.

Not mighty in your self-discipline, your positive thinking, your New Year's resolution.

Mighty in God.

There is empowerment for you in this verse.

You were never meant to win this war in your own strength, and that is good news.

The pressure is off your shoulders.

Paul makes the same point to the Ephesians when he tells us that with the full armor of God we can stand in the evil day.

About our enemy he says...

Ephesians 6:12

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

The prophet Zechariah put it in a few words that every believer should memorize:

Zechariah 4:6b

‘Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ Says the Lord of hosts.

Here is the point:

You bring your surrender to God. God brings His power to the enemy.

This morning we are going to look especially at both halves of verse 5 by means of establishing a battle strategy.

2 Corinthians 10:5

5 casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,

In this verse Paul gives us both a demolition and a construction plan. These stand on the two pillars of Faith and discipline.

First, we will learn how to tear down the strongholds and arguments raised up against the knowledge of God.

Second, we will see how we are able to take every single thought captive to the obedience of Christ.

Similar in approach to last week's lesson, we will see that one is a wall that falls once.

The other is a habit you will practice daily for the rest of your life.

Paul names the target: strongholds, arguments, every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God.

A stronghold is not just a bad mood or a passing temptation. It is a fortified way of thinking — built brick by brick, sometimes over years — that has convinced you it is unshakable.

'That's just who I am.'

'God could never really forgive that.'

'I'll always struggle with this.'

'People like you don't change.'

And one of the most prevalent in the church today...

'The end justifies the means.'

Those are not neutral opinions. They are walls.

Scripture gives us a picture of exactly this kind of wall in the book of Joshua.

Jericho was the most fortified city the Israelites would face — walls so thick that houses were built into them (Joshua 2:15).

By every natural measure, it was unconquerable.

So, God did not give Israel a battering ram.

He gave them a strange set of instructions: march, blow trumpets, shout.

Joshua 6:20

So the people shouted when the priests blew the trumpets. And it happened, when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat...

The writer of Hebrews later tells us what made that wall fall:

Hebrews 11:30 - 'By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were encircled for seven days'.

Not by Israel's engineering. By faith and obedience to God's plan, not man's.

That is the pattern Paul is describing in 2 Corinthians 10 — spiritual strongholds do not fall to human strategy.

They fall to God's power, released through our obedience.

The Book of Proverbs gives us the same picture from the wisdom literature:

Proverbs 21:22

A wise man scales the city of the mighty and brings down the trusted stronghold.

Notice the word 'trusted.' Every stronghold in your mind has your trust.

That's what makes it a stronghold instead of just a stray thought.

It has earned a place of authority it was never supposed to have.

In the Book of Judges, Gideon faced this in his own household, literally...

...his own father's altar to Baal was standing in the family compound, and God's first command to Gideon was not to fight the Midianites, but to tear down the false altar in his own backyard.

Before he could ever lead others into freedom, he had to tear down the stronghold closest to home.

Beloved, that is the one God always asks us to address first.

Paul names the New Testament version of the current strongholds we all face today in Romans:

He tells it to us straight...

Romans 1:22 - professing to be wise, they became fools'

Human philosophy, human pride, human self-sufficiency and now access to unlimited pseudo-information via the internet has been built up into 'every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God.'

That includes cultural arguments against Scripture, but it also includes the quiet argument in your own heart that says you don't need to submit to God on every issue.

It can lead even devout Christians to pick and choose scripture, allowing the enemy to build a stronghold in their minds that is not God's desire or the solid truth of the Gospel.

Here is the empowering truth in our foundational scripture: **The weapons are already mighty in God.**

You are not asked to out-argue the stronghold.

You are asked to bring God's power to bear on it — through the Word, through worship, through sensitivity and obedience to the Holy Spirit's filling — and watch what human effort could never do, happen.

The walls fall flat.

Now let's look again at the second part of our key scripture...

2 Corinthians 10:5b

bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,

Notice the shift in verb tense and scope.

While tearing down a stronghold is a decisive, one-time demolition — a wall that falls...

'Bringing every thought into captivity' is a present, ongoing, moment-by-moment discipline.

That is a much bigger, much more personal assignment, and it is the one many believers tend to skip.

This is where the war is actually won or lost day to day...

not in the dramatic deliverance moment, but in the seven o'clock in the morning, three-fifteen in the afternoon, eleven-thirty at night moments

when a thought shows up uninvited and you decide, often without even realizing you're deciding, whether to entertain it or arrest it.

Paul gives us the positive filter for this discipline in his letter to the Philippians:

Philippians 4:8

Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure,

whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy — meditate on these things.

And **Romans 12:2** gives us the mechanism:

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

This is not gritted-teeth suppression of your thoughts — it is renewal of your mind.

A thought captured to the obedience of Christ is not just silenced; it is replaced.

David shows us the posture that has to come before the capturing — an invitation for God to do the searching, because we cannot always see our own strongholds:

Psalm 139:23–24

Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

And Isaiah gives us the promised result when the mind is deliberately fixed on God rather than on the fear or the lie:

Isaiah 26:3

You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You.

None of this works with willpower alone, because willpower has no authority over a lie. Only truth does...

...and the truth is found in God's Word and then only when it is interpreted in real time by the Holy Spirit.

Paul tells his young disciple Timothy exactly how to approach Scripture:

2 Timothy 2:15

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

'Rightly dividing' — the word pictures a farmer cutting a straight furrow, or a builder cutting a stone precisely to fit because he has the skill to do it.

It means handling the Word carefully, in context, revealed by the Spirit, letting it say what it is saying rather than bending it to fit your preconceptions or preferred outcome.

That care matters, because the Word is our offensive weapon against the world's lies and the twisting of the enemy in our mind:

Hebrews 4:12

For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Notice that: The Word is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

The very thing Paul tells us to take captive in 2 Corinthians 10, the Word of God is uniquely equipped to expose.

This is why my own daily study discipline matters to you beyond my teaching on Sunday morning... and I say this in true humility...

a stronghold cannot be torn down by a verse you have never actually stored in your heart. It's true for me and it's true for you.

If the sword stays in the sheath all week, it will not be in your hand for battle against the thought that shows up at 11:30 at night.

Taking thoughts captive is a powerful practice.

Here is a simple, practical pattern you can use this week, every time an unwanted thought shows up:

It's all about pausing when a toxic, anxious, or defeating thought pops up, recognizing that it doesn't align with Gospel truth, and deliberately replacing it with what God says is true.

Here are four common negative thought patterns, along with the specific scriptures you can use to replace them:

1. The thought of absolute failure

The captive thought: "I completely messed up again. I'm a failure, and I'll never get this right. God must be so disappointed in me."

The scripture replacement: Romans 8:1

"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

2. The thought of constant anxiety

The captive thought: "What if everything goes wrong? I can't handle this pressure, and I don't see how this situation is going to work out."

The scripture replacement: Philippians 4:6–7

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

3. The thought of unworthiness or insecurity

The captive thought: "I'm not smart enough, attractive enough, or successful enough. I don't really fit in, and I have nothing valuable to offer."

The scripture replacement: Ephesians 2:10

"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."

4. The thought of loneliness and abandonment

The captive thought: "I am completely on my own in this. Nobody truly understands what I'm going through, and even God feels incredibly far away."

The scripture replacement: Hebrews 13:5

"...for He has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.'"

A quick tip on the mechanics:

When these thoughts hit, it helps to actually say the scripture out loud.

It forces your brain to stop processing the anxious thoughts.

1. Name it. Don't let it stay vague or vaguely uncomfortable — identify exactly what the thought is claiming and how it makes you feel.

- 2. Test it. Ask, 'Is this true, according to the Word of God?' Not according to your feelings, your history, or your fear — according to Scripture, rightly divided.**
- 3. Arrest it. Refuse it a seat at the table. Do not negotiate with it or rehearse it.**
- 4. Replace it. Fill the space with what is true, noble, and praiseworthy — a specific verse, not a vague positivity.**
- 5. Submit it. Bring it under 'the obedience of Christ' — ask, does this thought lead me to be closer to Him, or does it lead me away from Him?**

And finally... meditate on 2 Corinthians 10:5 this week.

Paul did not write these words as a theory.

He wrote them as a man who had personally watched arguments fall, who had personally learned to take his own thoughts captive, who knew what it cost and what it was worth.

He is not describing a battle he watched from a distance. He is describing the terms of his own survival — and he hands those same terms to you this morning.

You do not have to live under that stronghold one more week.

You do not have to let that thought sit in the seat of authority in your mind one more day.

The weapons are mighty in God.

The Word is sharper than any two-edged sword.

The peace of God is already standing guard, waiting for you to take up the fight He has already won.

Let's pray...