

Dismantling Strongholds

I. INTRO

- A. Last week we talked about Satan, the Devil, and I tried to give you a brief understanding of who he is, his character, his schemes, and his realm of attack
- B. You could summarize *John 8:44b: He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.*
- C. Lies. We all believe lies.
- D. Some biblical counselors believe you can break most lies down into three main categories: fear, shame, and rejection.
 - 1. Fear → “I am not safe.” → Anxiety, control issues
 - 2. Shame → “I am worthless” → Depression, self-destruction
 - 3. Rejection → “I am unloved/unwanted” → withdrawal & anger
- E. I can relate. I spent massive amounts of my life with the recurring lie in my mind, “Of course you dropped the ball. You always let people down. You’re a disappointment.”
 - 1. As I’ve told you before, I wrestled with depression, self-destruction
 - 2. Do those lies still resurface? Of course. But I know how to deal with them.
 - a) I am going to talk about that today to equip you too
- F. Can you relate? I can give artificial examples that resonate with our hearts...
 - 1. Suzy Q lost her mom when she was young to cancer. As a grown woman, she had three miscarriages. Although her young son is healthy, she lives in constant anxiety and operates like a helicopter parent. Her husband says she is controlling. Her son feels smothered. She is just waiting for the next tragedy to strike her family. Fear has taken root in Suzy’s life.
 - 2. John’s dad walked out on the family when he was a young teen because he found another, younger love interest. John’s mom sank into depression and started isolating herself from the family → just going to work and then hiding in her room. Although everyone kept saying, “It’s not your fault,” deep down John feels otherwise. After all, his dad doesn’t want anything to do with him. His mom stops paying him attention. Even his friends don’t know what to say. He feels unwanted, unloved. He gets in fights at school. He has no friends. It’s getting worse. Rejection has taken root.
- G. What happens when lies become more than lies? What happens when lies grow? They become what the Bible calls “strongholds”
 - 1. Counselor Neil Anderson defines a stronghold as “A lie you live by”
 - 2. In the book of 2 Corinthians we learn where they come from and how to deal with them... so each of us can experience freedom from lies as we embrace TRUTH and are renewed in our minds

II. 2 Corinthians 10:3–6

- A. The church in Corinth was a church that had embraced LIES
- B. Although the Apostle Paul was their spiritual father, bringing them the gospel, the lies they believed were undermining his authority and influence among them

- C. Under a new group of teachers that Paul mockingly called “super-apostles,” human credentials and worldly wisdom propagated several pervasive lies:
1. **LIE #1** – “You must boast in your spiritual experiences.” Some claimed ecstatic visions and experiences showed superior spirituality
 2. **LIE #2** – “We’re above moral constraints.” Some claimed forgiveness in Christ justified licentious behavior (1 Cor 6:12; 2 Cor 12:21).
 3. **LIE #3** – “Human wisdom surpasses the cross.” Greek philosophical categories (Sophist rhetoric, Stoic self-sufficiency) were exalted over the “folly” of Christ crucified and the humble path of acknowledging weakness
 4. **LIE #4** – “Maturity = prestige and power.” They falsely taught that wealth, charismatic personality, and influence were signs of divine favor, disparaging Paul’s “weak” apostleship since he kept getting arrested
 5. In Corinth, these lies became mental strongholds—entrenched patterns of thought that exalted human reasoning and appetites above God’s truth
- D. *2 Corinthians 10:3–6 [3] For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. [4] For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. [5] We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, [6] being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete.*
- E. *[3] For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh.*
1. *For though we walk in the flesh* → we can’t escape the world and all its philosophies...
 - a) Just bc we hear them doesn’t mean they are true
 - b) What are some of our culture’s lies?
 - (1) Feelings = facts
 - (2) Self-image determines destiny (e.g. a flawless brand guarantees perfect life)
 - (3) More choice equals more freedom
 - (4) Morality is purely personal
 - (5) You owe yourself
 - c) These are all lies of OUR culture. We live in the world.
 2. *Not waging war according to the flesh* → How do we fight against lies?
 - a) Some people get violent... some people resort to bullying... some people use intimidation or political maneuvering
 - b) These tactics might give some temporary reprieve, but
 - (1) At best they are short lived
 - (2) At worst they are evil responses to evil situations
 3. Paul’s point is that although Christ followers share the world’s battleground, our methods and aims differ radically
- F. *[4] For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds.*
1. Fleshly battle relies on social status, influence, rhetorical skill, coercion, ability, strength, etc & they have no power to destroy strongholds

2. I have good news for you → you don't need to be a Navy Seal to fight this fight. You have something even better
 3. Your weapons are capable of "demolition" against strongholds
 4. Again, Neil T. Anderson defines a stronghold as "a lie that you live by"
 - a) Corinth church... our culture... your life
 - b) What's the lie you tell yourself? "You're not safe. This is going to fall apart..."
 - c) What's the lie society speaks over your children? "You have no value as you are..."
 - d) What's the lie your parent, ex, whoever spoke over you? "I never wanted you..."
 5. What do you do against those kinds of attacks? Do you punch them in the face? Do you medicate them away? Do you drown them out with booze?
 6. What is our weapon? Truth
 - a) Knowing the truth
 - b) Praying the truth
 - c) Proclaiming the truth
 - d) Clinging to what is true
 7. Satan is the Father of LIES, but Jesus says this: *John 14:6 - Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."*
 8. By the way, nothing is new. *John 18:37–38, Jesus answered, "For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice." [38] Pilate said to him, "What is truth?"*
 - a) The enemy has always fought with lies. Jesus' response is truth.
- G. *[5] We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ*
1. "Every arrogant obstacle" basically describes reasoning, thought processes, and speculation that are counter to God's divine truth
 2. Paul says they get demolished by God's truth
 3. Think of the lies of the enemy like building blocks.
 - a) The enemy lays a cornerstone <e.g. A traumatic experience>
 - b) He builds on it brick by brick, beam, stud, sheathing
 - c) It is reinforced, strongly constructed, and it gets larger
 - d) Every time the lie is reinforced it's like feeding the beast
 4. But when God's truth comes face to face with it: it's like a well-placed demolition, destroying the tower in a single KABOOM
 5. Example: "I am worthless." → What is something worth? What you pay...
 6. Once the tower is destroyed, all that's left is maintenance →
 - a) "Take every thought captive" implies a continual discipline of submitting every thought, every attack to King Jesus' reign
 7. When a thought, a lie, comes into your mind, throw it in the cage
 - a) Don't feed it... feed it and it grows... then you extrapolate...

- b) Throw it in the cage and ask, “Is this true? Am I actually unwanted, unloved, rejected, a loser, etc?”
 - c) Flip the card catalog of Scripture hidden in your heart and pull out the TRUTH that eviscerates that lie
 - (1) No, this action WON’T make me actually happy
 - (2) No, that’s NOT who I am anymore
 - 8. You can’t just stop false ideas, you need to replace them with truth!
 - H. This isn’t secular positive thinking:
 - 1. Positive thinking is about aiming for a better mood or productivity.
 - 2. Tearing down strongholds begins with an acknowledgment of sin’s power, employs divine weapons, and pursues obedience to Christ as the ultimate aim and proof of true transformation.
- III. SUMMARY: The enemy is a liar. Jesus is the source of truth.
- A. Romans 12:2, [2] Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. (ESV)*
- B. GET IN TRUTH. TEAR DOWN LIES. STOP BELIEVING WHAT IS FALSE!**
- C. 3-Step Process (helps to do this out loud with a friend)**
- 1. Identify → “Arguments... raised against the knowledge of God”
 - a) Examine recurring negative thoughts and the triggers
 - b) Search for the root. When did this start?
 - 2. Confront → “Destroy arguments”
 - a) Verbally renounce and reject the lie in Jesus name
 - b) I reject the lie that I am “<insert>”
 - 3. Replace → “Take every thought captive to obey Christ”
 - a) Replace lies with truth and new patterns (worship, confession, obedience, community, etc)
 - b) “In Christ I am <insert>!”
- D. I want to point something out → this is about the gospel always
- 1. Revisit Eph 6 → Past tense / present tense
 - a) Having put on truth, righteousness, & gospel
 - b) Take up faith, helmet, word\
 - c) As you PRAY & PROCLAIM
 - 2. It’s all about the gospel: not a magic formula, not discipline
- E. It’s about the gospel
- 1. The Gospel believed... instead of the baggage of the world
 - 2. The Gospel understood... its richness, its implications
 - 3. The Gospel applied... to lies, to wounds, to trauma, to life
 - 4. You never graduate from the Gospel
- F. Eph 3:18-19, And may you have the power to understand, as all God’s people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. 19 May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God.*