

THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST

2Co 10:4 For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds,

2Co 10:5 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,

Paul was fond of using historical or natural things around him to metaphorically teach spiritual principles. We have such a case here. Paul is alluding to an historical event that took place not far from his home town of Tarsus. This historical metaphor teaches us about dealing with the spiritual battle we all experience. The Christian is not faced with battle with natural weapons and artillery. The Christian faces spiritual weapons and artillery. To understand the natural historical metaphor Paul is alluding to here will help us in our battle we face. In the ancient world, before Paul was born, pirates were a real problem on the seas. They would conduct raiding operations upon Roman cargo ships coming from all over their kingdom. These pirates were rebels against the Roman ruler and his kingdom. These pirates became such a problem that Rome was suffering lack because of the theft of much food and provisions. The Roman ruler at the time knew he had to act or it could bring down his kingdom. Every attempt to catch or destroy these pirates failed. The pirates maneuvered their faster ships away to their cliff strongholds and would hide out every time they were chased. Somehow these strongholds would have to be destroyed before these pirates could be captured and brought to justice. The general Pompeii was given the tasks of ridding the republic of these pesky pirates once and for all. After some time of fruitless attempts to chase down these pirates, Pompeii knew for sure that he had to bring down their rock cliff fortresses, but how? One day, the idea came to him. He would use the weapons they used for land sieges to do this. He used the catapults to attack the rock cliffs. He put his large catapults on his ships and sailed up close to the rock cliffs and instead of hurling burning material or stones like in the land sieges, he used grappling hooks. He catapulted large grappling hooks up on the rock cliffs and let his sails fill with wind and pull against the rock cliffs. After time he was able to pull down this rock fortresses. When he did, thousands of pirates fled out of them. It was fairly easy at

this point to catch the individual fleeing pirates. These prisoners were taken captive and led back to the Roman ruler for sentencing which was death by the Roman ruler.

Paul is alluding to this historical event here in 2 Corinthians, and it teaches us some lessons about spiritual warfare. Many Christians are getting robbed and pillaged by spiritual pirates. These pirates are **thoughts from the enemy**. Enemy thoughts are sent to us from the flesh, devil, and the world. They seem to be relentless some days! We could spend all our time trying to fight off thoughts, but to experience true peace, we must demolish the strongholds they come from. Before we can deal with the thoughts themselves, we must deal with the strongholds they find refuge in. As with the pirates, so the enemy's thoughts find their strength and hiding place within strongholds. These thoughts all have one thing in common. They are **LIES**. Lies come out of a stronghold of **THE LIE!** All of the enemy's lies can be traced back to **THE LIE** Satan told Eve in Genesis. The original lie is that man can be a God for himself and does not need God as his life source. [**Gen. 3:5**]

There are two main strongholds that the enemy has constructed against mankind that house all of his pirate lies that pillage mankind. Both of these strongholds are based in **THE LIE**. The name of the first stronghold is **LEGALISM**. The name of the other is **LAWLESSNESS**. Both of these strongholds propagate **THE LIE** that man can live apart from God. Legalism is based upon rules and regulations in which man tries to find righteousness and life by his **OWN** works. Legalism accepts and embraces the existence of God, but man tries to be like Him by his own works. Satan gave Adam and Eve **THE LIE** in the garden, and said that they could be as God. Legalism and religion is an elaborate set of rules and regulations in which man tries to be just that- like God. Religion preaches Godliness. However, God and man disagree on how it is obtained. God offers it as a gift through the new birth and the giving of his own HOLY LIFE imparted into man by grace, but religious man wants to be like God on their own terms and by their own works so they can boast in it. Lawlessness is on the other spectrum. Lawlessness is the casting off of God and his knowledge and living apart from him as one pleases. Those in lawlessness could care less about being like God. They want to be their own God and do just as they please. They live by their own rules and what seems right and what feels good to them. Both of these strongholds are found in what the Bible calls the **FLESH**. In the

flesh there is both human good and evil. From man's flesh come **religion and legalism** and also **lawlessness and sin**. Often we find them alternating in many people. They will “sin up a storm” and then try to do good deeds to make up for it! Both legalism and lawlessness are strongholds of **THE LIE** in which thoughts and reasonings hide and attack from. Paul said that his weapons were not carnal but might through God to the pulling down of these strongholds. Paul did not mention here what his weapons were. However, Paul did mention what his weapons were a few chapters earlier in this same letter.

(2Co 6:7) by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left,

Paul said his weapons were the **word of truth** and the **power of God**. These were the armor of righteousness that was on his right and left hand. Notice that Paul brought down the strongholds of **THE LIE**, by the **WORD OF TRUTH**! What is the word of truth? It is that Jesus Christ is our righteousness, life, and power. These come as a gift when we accept His Lordship over our lives. When we receive Jesus as our righteousness, life source, and power for living then the strongholds of legalism and lawlessness will be destroyed.

To win in the spiritual war we all face, we must bring down the strongholds of legalism and lawlessness. To do this we must understand the gospel and the New Covenant. The gospel and the New Covenant are based in Jesus coming and removing our sin and sins from us so that He could enter us and become our life source from which we are to bear His likeness and fruit by our union with Him. Godliness is achieved by God living and expressing Himself in a man or woman by their faith. We live this kind of life not by the efforts of works but by resting in God's grace and ability that is within us by His presence. This is achieved not by following laws, but drawing upon the life of Christ within us by faith. It is found by tapping into the grace of God within us.

We must understand **THE TRUTH** before we can bring down **THE LIE!** We are not God! We never were created to be Him! We do not possess life and power apart from him and therefore cannot produce righteousness and life without His empowering presence and grace within us. We must receive the gift of His righteousness and draw upon

His life within us by faith before we can live a life that gives honor and praise to God and see the enemy defeated in our life.

Once these strongholds are brought down, we then must engage the pirates! We must know how to bring them to an end. The artillery of the enemy are not natural arrows, bullets, or missiles- they but are thoughts and reasonings! We must know what to do when evil thoughts bombard our mind. If we do not know what to do we will be brought into bondage to sin and various lusts of the flesh and end up bound in strongholds. The flesh, the devil, and the world are constantly sending their pirates to steal, kill, and destroy our lives. Again, bringing down the strongholds of **THE LIE** is necessary before we can defeat the pirates, but you must know what to do with the pirates also.

How do we defeat the pirates of evil thoughts? Well Paul tells us here in 2 Corinthians 10:5. Nowhere else in the New Testament do we get plain instruction on what to do with evil thoughts that come against us. It is so simple that we miss it! The problem is that we try to do everything else in fighting evil thoughts than what it is told for us to do! Most Christians either allow thoughts to come into their mind and heart unhindered and unopposed or they try to overcome them themselves. Both are a mistake! When we let thoughts come through our mind unopposed we must realize that each thought brings something with it. It brings a brick! It brings a brick, that if allowed into the mind and heart, will start erecting a stronghold of the enemy there! The other thing Christians do that is a mistake is to try to fight the thought and overcome it themselves. We are not called to battle thoughts. **We are called to bring them into captivity.** What is the difference? Fighting against a thought means that you think the battle is not already won! Bringing a thought into captivity is using your authority and proclaiming its defeat already! The enemies of God are already defeated by Jesus. We merely are to enforce the victory. We can boldly say to an enemy thought, "I bring you into captivity in Jesus name!" It will obey! Surely it is not so simple! It is simple dear one. If we will but follow the prescription of God we would avail of His grace and victory. What are we told to do with evil thoughts that propagate **THE LIE**?

"bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,"

What we are told to do with evil thoughts is to bring them into captivity and bring them unto the obedience of Christ. This is where the enemy has confused us on what this means. Somehow most people read this to mean that we must bring every thought into obedience **TO CHRIST**. This therefore is something we must struggle to do. It often morphs into a call for **US** to be obedient! Manifold sermons have been preached that we must control our minds and therefore become obedient to Christ in order to win the battle against the enemy. This verse however is not focused upon **OUR own obedience** but **THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST!** What does it mean by the “obedience of Christ?” This term means the obedience Christ showed in His perfect life and His perfect death. God demanded perfect obedience from man. Adam and all of us that have come out of him have failed God in this respect. To bring mankind redemption and salvation, this had to be rendered to God. Jesus offered up perfect obedience to God in our behalf

Heb 5:8 though He was a Son, *yet* He learned **obedience** by the things which He suffered.

Php 2:8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and **became obedient** to *the point of* death, even the death of the cross.

Rom 5:19 For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also **by one Man's obedience** many will be made righteous.

The obedience of Christ is the saying of **YES** to God where Adam and all of mankind said **NO! THE LIE** that caused Satan and Adam to fall is rooted in **REBELLION**. Jesus gave God on behalf of man a resounding **YES** of complete obedience and trust. His entire existence and all He did came from abiding in the Father and drawing upon the Father. Jesus said all that He did and everything He said came from the Father. Jesus lived out **THE TRUTH!** Jesus finished work in His perfect life and His perfect offering of Himself unto death is the **OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST**. We are to take every evil **REBEL** thought and bring it to the **OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST**. Every evil pirate thought is a **REBEL** against God. We are to take each rebel and march them to Christ and His perfect obedience for execution, just like the pirates were led to the Roman ruler for execution. How do we do this? It is not hard. When an evil thought comes to you then you need to do something with it! Instead of fighting with it and trying to overcome it, you need to do what God says to do with it! Simply by faith say to it, "Evil thought I take you captive in the name of Jesus, I now bring you and submit you to the **OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST**." That is all you need to do! The Spirit of God will do the rest! He will execute it! Too simple you

say? God's ways are never complicated and often too easy that we miss it! God tells us we are to take every thought captive unto the obedience of Christ. Just as the captured pirates were taken back to the Roman ruler for punishment, so we take each rebel thought directly to Christ and His obedience for punishment. We are leading them to Christ and His obedience for execution.

Maybe you are not convinced that we are to bring evil thoughts to God and let Him handle them instead of you handling them yourself. Let me give you another proof text.

(1Pe 5:7) Casting the whole of your care [all your anxieties, all your worries, all your concerns, once and for all] on Him [Christ], for He cares for you affectionately and cares about you watchfully.
[Amplified]

Here we are told what to do with cares, anxieties, worries, and concerns. All of these come to us in **THOUGHT** form! They are wicked pirates that want to take from us and build their stronghold of fear in us. Are we told to fight them? Are we told to overcome them ourself? What is told for us to do with them? We are to take them captive and hand them over to Him! I used to think that God took them and put them on His strong shoulders and bore them for me. No! He executes them! They are **rebels against His nature, goodness, and salvation!** If you struggle with anxieties, worries, and concerns yourself then these will not be defeated with finality! We must take captive evil thoughts and march them to Christ and His obedience for execution!

Now we must do this by and in faith. Just saying, "Thought I take you captive in Jesus name and I bring you and submit you to the obedience of Christ" is not some magic phrase we speak out of an empty head or heart! If we do not understand what the obedience of Christ means then our faith cannot do this. Jesus died for all rebellion and overcame our rebellion by his obedience in his life and death. When we submit each and every rebellion to the perfect obedience of Christ, the power of the cross and the spirit will overcome it for us! Try doing what God says to do and you will see victory in the battle!