

Battle of the Mind 2

by Anton Bosch

Breaking down strongholds in our minds requires discipline, effort, and a commitment to being separate from the world and its influences.

Duration: 49:52

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Romans 12:2, 2 Corinthians 10:1, Galatians 1:3, Ephesians 4:27, James 4:4, 1 John 2:15

Topics: "Mind"

Description

The video discusses the power of television and multimedia in delivering messages to our senses. It emphasizes that television and movies have a strong impact because they engage both our visual and auditory senses simultaneously. However, the speaker warns that not all messages conveyed through these mediums align with the gospel of Jesus Christ. He cautions against allowing worldly influences to enter our minds and reinforce negative thought patterns. The speaker encourages Christians to remain separate from the world and to rely on the Word of God to break down strongholds.

Transcript

Corinthians, 2 Corinthians and Chapter 10. 2 Corinthians Chapter 10. We've been dealing with the battle of the mind and we want to continue with those thoughts today and it'll take us another few weeks to exhaust this passage.

And so, we'll read from 2 Corinthians Chapter 10 and the first six verses. 2 Corinthians 10, verse 1. Now I, Paul, myself am pleading with you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, who in presence am lowly among you, but being absent, am bold toward you. But I beg you that when I am present, I may not be bold with a confidence by which I intend to be bold against some, who think of us as if we walked according to the flesh.

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, 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, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled. So, you'll see that he speaks about the fact that we do not war according to the flesh, verse 4, but the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but are mighty in God for pulling down strongholds.

We spoke last week about the powerful weapons that we do have that are able to pull down those strongholds. We touched on and introduced the concept or the idea of these strongholds last week, and I want to deal with those strongholds this morning. These strongholds are strong things in our minds.

These are entrenched thought patterns, habits, lifestyles, things that are complexes. They take all shapes and forms. They can take the form of lust, which seems to be something that someone is not able to get rid of in their minds.

Inferiority complexes, superiority complexes, negative ways of seeing themselves, negative ways of seeing other people, all sorts of issues that we have in our minds that just seem to be so entrenched and so powerfully part of who we are and affect everything that we see and everything that we think about is from the perspective of these strongholds, and they are called strongholds because they are powerful. They are not easily destroyed, and they occupy important places in our thinking, and they dominate the landscape of our minds and of our hearts and of our feelings. These strongholds are built one rock or one stone at a time.

That's how fortresses are built. I know many fortresses in this country were originally built. They were stockades built out of logs or built with wood, but traditionally these strongholds and fortifications would be built out of rock, and in the adult Bible class we've been dealing with the book of Daniel, and this morning we saw how the Nebuchadnezzar or Belshazzar, rather, how that his kingdom was overthrown even though he lived in the stronghold of Babylon which had three sets of massive walls, walls that were 30 feet deep into the ground so that you couldn't tunnel through them.

They were so wide that two chariots could ride on the top of the walls, so you couldn't break through them, and then there were three sets of these walls. So even if you got through the first barricade, you still had to get through the second and the third before you could get into the city. And that is a typical picture, an example of a stronghold.

And these are strongholds which we have in our minds, and strongholds are built one rock at a time. You just begin at the bottom and you put down a rock and you put a next rock and a next rock and eventually you build this strong fortification which is impregnable, which cannot be overtaken and thrown down easily. And that's how these strongholds are formed in our minds.

They begin when we are very small. They begin even before we come to Christ. And so one thought is added to another thought and then another thought and another thought and a little experience here and something else that I read over there and something else that somebody says over there.

And so we add these little thoughts one after the other and when we put them together, we find that we have the stronghold within our minds which seems to control us and that seems to dominate us. And it's these strongholds that Paul is speaking about. And you'll see that these strongholds are made up of arguments because he says in verse 5, verse 4, Mighty in God to the pulling down of strongholds, verse 5, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God.

So when he speaks about bringing down the strongholds, he says that it is arguments that have to be brought down. That word arguments, remember we touched on that last week. The Greek word for that is logismos meaning from the same word that we get the word logic.

These are arguments. These are reasons. Why am I the way I am? I have all sorts of reasons why I am.

I have all sorts of reasons why I do the things that I do. Why I react the way I react. Why I'm addicted to certain thought processes or certain lifestyles.

We have reasons, there are arguments, and they're strongly entrenched in our minds and in our thinking. And it's just built up over time. And the longer that we continue to allow that stronghold to be built up, the more powerful it becomes.

And so it's like any habit. The longer you do a particular thing, they tell me that it takes three weeks to form a habit. And so you do the same thing over and over for three weeks, it becomes entrenched, it becomes a stronghold in a sense.

It becomes something that you just do. You don't even think about it. You just do that.

That's amazing. It's amazing how quick and easy we begin to build a habit. They tell me that most habits, it takes about three weeks to break that habit.

That's if it's just a minor thing like what you do. We all have our little routines, we have our little habits. When I come downstairs to my office in the mornings, I have my certain habits.

I switch on the air and I open the door. I switch on the light. I switch on my music.

I switch on my computer. That's just a habit. I don't even think about it.

I just do it. Now to stop that routine, it's going to take me three weeks of consciously coming in and not doing some of those things. But there are other habits that take us a lot longer to break.

And so the habit of alcohol or addictions to some kind of substance, that can take years to break. And maybe you can get out of it initially in the first few weeks, but it's going to take years before you're completely free of that particular habit. There are other things, the way that we see ourselves, inferiority complexes, that can take a lifetime to try and break down and to destroy.

And yet those things are very powerful and they're within our minds. Now, if we're going to bring them down, if we're going to destroy them, you have to destroy them the same way they are built. There is just no quick, easy answer.

This is the problem, is that there are many preachers who go about saying, well, you know, come to the front and I'll pray over you and you'll be delivered. We like to use this little word, deliverance. And people speak about having a deliverance ministry.

Well, the truth is that God sometimes does deliver us from certain things. And there are many examples in history, in church history and Christian history, of people who have instantaneously been delivered of a particular lifestyle or a particular habit or a particular stronghold. People who have been alcoholics or drug addicts.

There are definite testimonies of people who have been prayed for and instantly been delivered, who never craved another drink or another shot or another whatever. People who instantly stopped swearing and using foul language. That happens.

God is able to do that. There is no question that anything is possible with God and that God can set us free and deliver us from these things. But for most of us, it doesn't happen that way.

For most of us, we have to break those strongholds down one brick or one rock, one stone at a time, the same way as it was built up. And that takes a long time. And that takes a lot of discipline.

Because the problem is that many of these things are easily built up. They're very hard to break down. Now that's just strange because many good things are so hard to build up and so easy to break down.

It's hard to build a church. It's easy to destroy it. You can break it down in a few days.

I've seen this happen. You can build up something good in your life and it will take a long time to build it up. And yet someone can just come in one sentence or one word or one experience, one interaction, just destroy years and years of good work.

And yet these evil things are so easily built up and they're so hard to break down. And the problem is that they are built up out of thoughts and things that we see primarily, things that come in through the gates of our mind. What are the gates of my mind? They are simply the senses.

My eyes, what I see, what I hear, what I taste and what I feel to a lesser extent, but primarily through what I see and through what I hear. These are the two main areas where we build up these strongholds. And the problem is that as I try to break them down, they are constantly being rebuilt by the devil and by the world and its systems.

And so I can try and break things down in my message this morning and I can try and destroy some of those things in my teaching and in my preaching, but the problem is that all of us are out there in the world and we're constantly being bombarded by thoughts and by ideas and by impressions through all of our experiences, our experiences in our interaction with one another, our experiences as we listen to the television and watch the television, which is very, very powerful, because the power of the television and of the movies, of those sorts of media, is that they're bombarding two of your senses immediately, what you see and what you hear at the same time. And that's a very powerful way of getting the message home. And so it's able to... those are very powerful things.

When we read, well, that is only coming through what I see, and it's not so strong, it's not so powerful. What I listen to, whether that be in preaching or whether it be on the radio, it is also not as powerful because it's only coming in one of those gates. But when I'm reading or when I'm watching something on television or on some multimedia show, it is bombarding me from two areas.

And this is particularly why movies are so powerful, because you get locked into that space and the lights are dark and you have no outside reference. All you have is what you see on the screen and what you're hearing, and the sound is loud and the picture is huge and it's massive, and so it fills and it completely controls and overwhelms your senses so that everything that you see is in the reference of that. So that you can be in a movie and you can think it's raining and you're surprised, has this ever happened to you? You're surprised when you go outside and it's not raining or the movie is about snow and ice and something like that and you go outside and it's 100 degrees outside and you're shocked that it's actually 100 degrees when in fact you're enveloped in this artificial area, artificial space which made you think that it was something different.

This is how powerful some of these things are. The problem is that we are constantly being bombarded by these things that are building up strongholds in our minds. Learned people tell me that we receive up to 5000 messages a day, 5000 different messages, different stimuli that come in through what I see primarily

and what I hear, through the advertising media, through the newspapers, through the magazines, through the billboards as I travel around, all sorts of messages on the radio, on the television, all sorts of messages coming at me all the time.

And what these messages are doing is that they are building various strongholds within my mind, within my heart. And the problem is that the majority of those messages are negative in the sense that they are worldly. They are not from God, but they are from the world.

And we look at those things and we say, but they are not a problem. They are neutral or they are basically good. But we need to understand that in fact in the world there is nothing that is good.

And that is one of the problems we have, is that the devil will use a thing called a Trojan horse. Now, most young people, when you speak about a Trojan horse, they will tell you this is a virus that comes on a computer. Most young people don't even understand that the name was borrowed from something which happened in history about 1,200 years before Christ, when the Greeks fought against the Trojans, against the city of Troy.

And you remember what happened was that, again, this was such a strong city, and it was so hard to take the city, it was almost impossible to take the city. And so what the Greeks did is they built this huge horse, wooden horse, and they put men inside of the horse. And they pulled this thing on wheels up to the gates of the city, and the Trojans looked at this great horse and they said, this is a beautiful thing.

And they said, let's bring it into the city. Maybe this is their sign of wanting to make peace. Maybe this is a good omen.

Let's bring it into the city. This is a beautiful thing. There were only two people in the city who said, we cannot bring this thing in.

This is a bad thing. We must not bring it into the city. But unfortunately, the majority of the Trojans said, let's bring it in.

And you know what happened? When they brought this horse into the city that night, the men came out of the horse, and they opened the gates, and the city of Troy was taken. What a terrible story. Now that's why we use that word for computers, because these worms or these viruses that come into the computers, they come hidden in something that looks good.

And so you're surfing the internet, and you see something that looks good, and you download it because it looks nice. But unfortunately, hidden inside of that program, or that little thing that you've downloaded, that game or whatever it is, hidden inside of that is the virus, which is now going to begin to destroy your computer from inside. That's just the way a Trojan horse works.

And the devil uses this trick very well with us as Christians. He comes and he presents something to us which looks good and looks beautiful. And we look at that and we say, that's a good thing.

And we bring it into our lives. We bring it into our thoughts and into our minds. But you know, inside is the enemy.

And once we brought it into the gates of our minds, the danger begins to develop, and begins to come out, and begins to process itself. And one of the problems is that as Christians, we are not convinced of the

fact that everything that is in the world is bad. Surely there's got to be something good in the world.

In fact, yesterday as I was travelling down, just coming past Bakersfield, we had the radio on and picked up a Christian station in that particular area. And there was this preacher saying, you know, I'm not like those people who want nothing to do with the world. We get down and dirty.

We get involved in the world and we, you know, we are not sort of holy and separate. And he was saying, this is a great and wonderful thing. And that is the message that's going out there right now.

As Christians, don't be separate. Be part of the world. Jesus said, yes, we're in the world, but we're not of the world.

And unfortunately, the message is going out that the world basically has a lot of good to it. The world has many good things that we can use in it. If you go to Christian bookstores, you'll pick up books that'll tell you how to read, how to see the gospel in The Sopranos.

Everybody know what The Sopranos is? Story about gangsters up in New Jersey area. Mobsters. Mafia.

And you know, here are books that tell you that in these stories that contain graphic images of adultery, fornication, murder, robbery, cheating, lying, stealing, that in this is hidden the message of the gospel. Now folks, that is sick. Because that does not contain the message of the gospel.

It contains the message of the world and is trying to create the impression that mobsters are basically good people. Because they're just like us. They just have the same problems that we have and they're just trying to get the same things that we're trying to get just in a slightly different way.

In fact, this is a Trojan horse which is presented to Christians. And so in fact you can go out there and you can find books that are now being written and in fact there are universities here in the Los Angeles, Christian universities in the Los Angeles area which run courses for Christian people how to see the gospel in anything that the world has to offer. How to see the gospel in music and rock bands.

How to see the gospel in every secular movie that you can find out there in the world. Folks, these things do not contain the gospel of Jesus Christ. Yes, they contain a gospel.

But it is a gospel which is against Jesus Christ. A gospel which is against the cross. A gospel which is against the word of God.

And we need to be sure about that. Because if we're not, we will allow these things into our minds and into our thinking and they will reinforce those strongholds which we are so desperately trying to break down. If you go to the word of God and I'm going to just quote you three scriptures.

One from Galatians chapter 1 and verse 3 where Paul speaks about our Lord Jesus Christ who gave himself for our sins that he might deliver us from this present evil age according to the will of our God and Father. Jesus died, Paul says, that he might deliver us out of that he may bring us out of this present evil age. Now folks, if that was the evil age 2,000 years ago I don't know what we have today.

It is even more evil than anything that Paul had. Jesus died to bring us out of this evil world. And yet we want to go back into this world.

We want to take the things of the world and say that they are holy and they are sanctified and they are good for us. When in fact they are far from that. In James chapter 1 and verse 27 James writes and he says, Pure and undefiled religion before God the Father is this to visit orphans and widows in their trouble and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.

Pure religion and undefiled is to keep ourselves unspotted from the world. There is the other side to it Augustine which I'm not focusing on this morning and that is to visit the orphans and the widows in their time of trouble. But you see that he speaks about being unspotted by the world.

Not even having one spot of the world upon us. In James 4, verse 4, James writes and he says, Adultery is an adulteress. And he's using this in a spiritual sense where people are married to Christ but at the same time having a relationship with the world.

That's spiritual adultery. That's what the accusation that God brings against Israel when instead of serving God they are worshipping God and worshipping Baal and the gods of the world. And so he says adultery is an adulteress if you do not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God.

Friendship with the world is enmity with God. There is just no way that you can be a friend of God and a friend of the world at the same time. These two things are opposite.

These two things are at enmity. These two things are at war with one another. He goes on and he says, Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

What a statement. Who wants to make himself an enemy of the world makes a friend of the world, makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you not know that the scripture says in vain the spirit who dwells in us earns or yearns jealously.

God wants us for himself. God wants us pure and holy. He does not want us to be shared with the world and with the things of the world.

And so you can see that our thinking is shaped by the things of the world. And the world, and this is the problem, is that most of us may read the Bible for three or four minutes a day and we may attend one or two services a week where for maybe one hour or two hours a week we receive spiritual input. But the rest of the time we are constantly being flooded with the world and its messages, its values, its ways of thinking, its reasonings, its arguments.

And they are diametrically opposed to the word of God. And so when it comes, and we spoke about materialism a few weeks ago. Let's just use that as an example.

The Bible says that these material things are of no consequence whatsoever. That we cannot serve God and mammon. And yet the world is going to be telling you all the time, every advert is going to tell you you must want better things, you must have a faster car, you must have a bigger house, you must have this, you must have that.

That success is measured in money and in the things of the world, in material things. That message is directly opposite to the message of the Gospel. The world says, you know, those who get it for themselves, those who are go-getters, those who do things my way as Frank Sinatra used to sing.

That these are the people who really get somewhere with spiritual things also. God helps those who help themselves. Based on that idea.

And yet again, this is completely opposite to the message of the Gospel. The message of the Gospel is, if any man will follow me, let him take up his cross. If you are going to be anything in the Kingdom of God, you need to become nothing.

He who wants to be first needs to become last. He who wants to become master needs to become the servant. And so the message of the Gospel is directly opposite to the message that the world is preaching.

Now, the world is preaching that message in everything that you read, everything that you see, everything that you hear out there. This is the problem. And so we have these strongholds in our minds.

And we are trying to break them down. We are trying to struggle with them and people come and visit me or speak to me and say, Brother, I struggle with these issues. And you need to speak to someone who really is struggling with some of these strongholds, whether it's lust, or whether it's materialism, or whether it's marital problems, or whether it's an inferiority complex, or whether it's an addiction.

And you see how people struggle with these things and just cannot get rid of them. And then you sit in a counseling situation and I wonder, how will we ever win when this person is hearing the Word of God for one hour a week and is hearing what the world has to say 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. It's impossible.

What we are breaking down or what the Word of God is breaking down in one hour is instantly being rebuilt before the next service. And so what are the solutions? Well, we'll present some of those solutions next week. But the first solution that I need to realize is that I have to stop building those strongholds.

I need to begin to set a guard and the scripture speaks about putting a guard at my mouth. In other words, before I speak, I need to check what goes out of my mouth. That's very important.

But I also need to set a guard at my eyes and my ears so that what comes in is checked. And you know when you when you have a city that is in the time of war and you have a stronghold and you have those walls, before anyone can come in through the gate he has to identify himself. Even today, if you go into a secure area whether it's a military area or a diplomatic area or whatever it is, you have to identify yourself.

So you get to the gate or to the little box or the window or whatever it is and you have to declare who you are. And you have to show some kind of identity. And when they verify that you are who you claim to be and then they'll decide whether you're good or bad, whether you're a friend or whether you're an enemy, then they'll let you in.

In the old days, they used to challenge somebody who goes at night. They'd say, who goes there? Friend or foe? Are you for us or are you against us? And you know, we need to do the same with the thoughts that come into our minds. We can't just let anything come into our minds but we do because we say sometimes they are camouflaged as good, sometimes we just know they're bad and yet we still allow them into our thinking.

We need to challenge every thought that comes into our minds. Everything we see, everything we read, we need to say, is that the truth? Is this going to help me or is it not going to help me? Is this the world building up its strongholds in my mind or is this the word of God? In fact, this is the problem is that as Christians we are just undiscerning. We accept everything as basically good and if it's not good then it's

not too bad.

Back home we have a saying that if it doesn't kill you it'll feed you. We cannot take that point of view when it comes to spiritual things. If it's not blatantly poisoned, well then it's not too bad.

You see, the problem with many poisons is that they build up and this is one of the things that medical people are discovering is that in the old days, remember many of the pipes that came into buildings were lead pipes and the lead would give off in the water, dissolve in the water a little bit at a time and this would build up over time in your body and eventually it will kill you. The same with mercury, the same with strychnine and the same with many other poisons. It's not the initial dose that kills you, it's the little bit all the time that's building up and building up and eventually when those toxic levels have reached to such a point in your body it will affect you.

It will make you sick and it may even kill you. And that's the problem, is that we get these, we say, but you know, brother, I've been watching those programs, I've been reading those books, I've been doing that particular thing all my life and it hasn't killed me. But in fact, it has affected you and it's building up these strongholds and you leave it long enough, eventually it will destroy you.

And so we need to check everything that we read, everything that we hear, because we are so, as people, we are so gullible. Because it's in the newspaper, it's got to be true. We just assume because it's in print, it's got to be true.

When in fact, most of what's written is biased. The guy has some kind of axe to grind, he has some kind of bias, he's trying to get across some kind of message. And you know, I'm just, as an outsider, I'm constantly amazed as I listen to the news and as I read the newspapers here and I, as we're at this time of getting ready for the elections, when you listen to the Republicans, well, you know, the other side, everything is bad about them and when you listen to the Democrats about the same story, everything about the other side is bad.

And when you look at these two men who are running for office, if you believe either side, these are terrible men. But you know, that's from that perspective, that's from that point of view. And the question is, what is the truth? And one of the things that you have to decide when you go to vote is what is the truth.

Between all of the stuff that is being said, and I know that there are strong feelings and I know there are strong feelings even in this congregation. There are people who are saying this side is right and others are saying this side is right. But you have to decide for yourself.

What is the truth? That's the question. What is the truth? What is the truth about these men and their war record? What is the truth about their past performance? What is the truth about where they really stand? And I'm not promoting one or the other, I'm trying to use this as an illustration. And when it comes to spiritual things, when it comes to everything that I let into my mind, what is the truth really? Because it's printed in the newspaper doesn't mean it's the truth.

Because it's written by a Christian leader doesn't mean it's the truth. It doesn't mean it's good for me. The fact that it is sold in a Christian bookstore, or the fact that it's on Christian television, does not mean it's good for you.

It may in fact be very, very bad for you. And in fact, let me tell you that much of what I've seen on Christian television here, and also we get some of these stations in South Africa also, that most of it is bad for you. I

do not encourage people to watch Christian television because there is more poison on there than there is good on there.

Now, we say, but you know, it's not, there's just some poison, it's not a big problem. Do you know that that snake venom is like 97%, and I'm sure Dr. Marcus will help me out here, but it's like 97% protein? It's not all bad. Snake venom is basically good, but it's the 3% that's going to kill you.

It's the same with rat poison. Rat poison is basically good food, but there's like a 5% of that food, that rat poison, that's going to kill you. And we say, well, you know, that's true when it comes to snake venom or rat poison, but you know, when it comes to the things of the world, you know, the 5%, it doesn't matter.

In fact, the sad thing is that the ratio on Christian television, the way I understand it, and Christian radio also, is that the percentage is even higher. 40%, 50% is poison. And it's going to kill you, because it's going to shape your thinking, slowly but surely.

It's going to build up strongholds. And so, how do I, how do I know the truth? There is only one truth, and that is the word of God. Not, not even what I'm telling, what I'm telling you is biased by my own experiences, biased by my own views.

There is only one thing that is the unadulterated, unwatered down, unchanged word of God, and that is this word of God. And unless you're reading the Bible, and unless you are consuming and absorbing the Bible into your mind and into your lifestyle and into your thinking, you're going to have strongholds in your mind which are constantly being built up, the quicker you try, as fast as you try and break them down. Next week we will start speaking about how that these things are broken down.

But what I would need for us to just come to absolute conclusion about this morning is that these strongholds are powerful in our minds. They shape basically who we are. And they are constantly being reinforced and being built up and being made stronger every day by the things that we see and that we hear.

And so we need to check what we hear. We need to question everything that we read. This is just not the way I do things.

This is something I believe with all my heart that every Christian needs to do. You pick up a book. It doesn't matter whether it's a Christian book written by a well-known Christian author or you watch a preacher on the television, and there are good preachers on the television, or whether it's me preaching.

You need to be checking everything you see and hear against the Word of God and saying, is this in fact the truth? Is that what the Word of God says? Because many times these arguments are so plausible, they are so well presented that we can go away and we can say, that's great. Many times this happens to me. I listen to a preacher and these guys are convincing.

Or I read a book and I say, but that's a good argument. That sounds good. And yet when I go away and I begin to compare that against the Word of God, I come to the conclusion that in fact it is flawed.

That was the same trick that the devil used when he came to Eve. He began with the truth. He didn't come to Eve with the lie.

He began with the truth. He said, now, what did God say? And she says, this is what God said. And he says, yeah, that's true.

But now, think about this, he says to her. And he changes it a little bit. And changes it a little bit more.

And eventually he presents the lie. In the New Testament Paul warns us, he says that even the angels of Satan, even the messengers of Satan, will present themselves as angels or messengers of light. Even the devil will present himself as the truth.

Because he's trying to convince, he knows he's not going to convince us by just presenting a lie, so he comes with the truth. But hidden inside the truth, hidden inside that Trojan horse, is the lie. The same way that we set traps for poison, for vermin, and for those sorts of things, there may be a little bit of cheese, but you know, there's a trap that's going to grab you when you take the cheese.

There may be some meat, but inside the meat there may be some strychnine. And that's the way he presents himself. And so what I need to do is I need to be suspicious about everything that comes from the world.

I need to be checking everything against the word of God. Is that the way God has it? Is that what the word of God says? Is that what the Bible says? Because until I stop the strongholds from being built up in my mind, it's no good trying to break them down. Because the quicker I break them down, they're going to be rebuilt.

And so the first recipe or the first step, if there are steps, and I haven't counted how many I'm going to present to you, but the first step towards victory in the spiritual battle of the mind is to stop that stronghold being reinforced and being rebuilt. That's the first step. Then we can begin to break it down.

But it's no good trying to break them down, as Paul speaks about here, about the strongholds being brought down and being brought up to, into submission and to the obedience of Christ, if I'm going to allow new ones in all the time. Set a guard to your eyes, to your ears, and even to your mind. Weigh and check everything against the word of God.

You see, when you go past the security checkpoint, what they will do is they will look at your name and they will look at the database. And if your name matches the database, they'll let you in. If your name doesn't match the database of what is, who are friendly, they won't let you in or maybe they'll even lock you up.

And so every thought that comes into my mind, I need to check it against the database. I need to say, is this the word of God? Is this true? If it is, let me let that thought in. Let me give it space in my mind and in my heart.

If it is not, let me throw it out. Let me not allow it one moment, because if I allow it in for one moment, it's going to find a foothold and it's going to begin to undermine me from the inside. Now folks, this sounds like very, very basic and practical and yet this is very, very real.

And so I trust that by the grace of God you will go home. Think about these things. Work out, is this really the way it is? Don't just take my word for it.

Read the word of God. Is the world all bad or is there some good in the world? Is there some good in the things that the world uses and the techniques and the methods and the systems and the values of the world? Or is it all bad? Is it all against God? Those are decisions we have to make for ourselves. I cannot enforce those decisions on you.

And as you know, we do not make rules in this church. We do not say, you may not go to the movies, you may not watch television, you may not do this or do that or the other thing. That is a decision you have to make for yourself.

But you need to be sure that everything you are allowing yourself to participate in, that that is building up, that that is something which is building up the good and the positive in your life and not something which is breaking down or something which is going to control you and manipulate you and eventually destroy your life. Let's pray. Father, as we talk about these things, we've spoken about very practical issues.

And yet, Lord, to some of us, maybe these things seem to be so unreal, surreal. They seem to be so impossible, improbable. And yet, Lord, we pray that you would, by your Spirit, just make clear to us the dangers that are out there in the world, that the devil will use anything, no matter how good and wholesome and how positive it seems, to be able to grab a control of our minds and to change our thinking into his way of thinking.

Help us, Lord, to be Christ-centered. Help us, Lord, to think the way you think. Help us, Lord, to see things the way you see things.

Help us, Lord, that our values may be your values. And, Lord, that we may become the people that you want us to be. Lord, you do not want us to be under the control and the domination of these strongholds, of these habits, of these lifestyles, of these values that control so many of us.

You want us to be delivered and set free. But, Lord, we need to go your way. And so, Lord, help us, first of all, to control what comes in, to control what builds up in our hearts and in our minds.

Lord, that we may be built up in our most holy faith, and that we may not be built up according to the systems of this world, but according to the system of the Lord and of his Christ. We ask these things in Jesus' name. Lord, as we part from one another, as we go home, we pray that even as we go about our business today, as we watch television, as we read the Sunday paper, as we speak to friends, as we surf the internet, whatever it is that we do, help us, Lord, to evaluate everything that we expose ourselves.

And understand, Lord, that these things are not neutral. Nothing is neutral out there. But that these things are either positive or negative in the way they shape us and in the way they mould us.

We ask that you would help us in these things in Jesus' name. Protect us, Lord. Keep us safe.

Bring us together again this evening that we may worship you once again. We ask these things in Jesus' lovely name. Amen.

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