

Casting Down Imaginations

by Carter Conlon

Carter Conlon's sermon emphasizes the necessity of surrendering our lives to God to effectively combat spiritual strongholds and advance His kingdom.

Duration: 46:52

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 10:4

Topics: "Mind", "Surrender", "Spiritual Warfare"

Description

Carter Conlon emphasizes the necessity of complete surrender to God in his sermon 'Casting Down Imaginations.' He explains that true spiritual warfare involves casting down strongholds and imaginations that oppose the knowledge of God, and that this can only be achieved through the power of the Holy Spirit in surrendered vessels. Conlon urges believers to allow God to reveal and overthrow any unsundered areas in their hearts, as these can hinder their ability to effectively share the gospel and bear fruit for God's kingdom. He highlights the importance of being vessels of truth, fully committed to God's will, in order to challenge the darkness in the world around us.

Transcript

Lord Jesus, I do surrender all. Lord, I surrender my life, my family, my past, my future. Lord, I surrender it all into your hands.

The only thing that I ask is that you would be honored and glorified. You bear fruit through this life for your namesake. Now, Holy Spirit, you are building a church in this last hour of time.

You are preparing a dwelling place. I would ask that you would enable me today to deliver the word that you put upon my heart. You birthed this in me, you gave it to me.

Lord, I ask that it would not be hindered by the frailty of this human vessel. But that you would override. Lord, just absolutely override and speak to every heart, speak to every life.

Those that are in the Lord for many years and those that are brand new babes in Christ. Lord, I ask that you speak clearly to every heart, even those who don't speak English as their first language, that you would give our translators today an anointing from on high that not one ounce of what you want to speak today would be lost. Thank you, Lord, that you're going to enable us.

God, you're going to give us the power to surrender our lives to your Lordship. Lord, it has to come from you, because it's not even within our hearts to do this, Lord. It's got to come from you.

Enable us, Holy Spirit. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

2 Corinthians chapter 10. My message is entitled, Casting Down Imaginations. Casting down imaginations, beginning at verse 4. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God, to the pulling down of strongholds.

Casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ, and having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience when all obedience is fulfilled. Now, the Apostle Paul, in this book of 2 Corinthians, is writing to the Corinthian church, and he's giving them the groundwork, or the framework, of truly what is our mission, and the power that God has given to us to fulfill that mission that he's put upon each one of our lives. We are called to be soldiers.

As Pastor David said this morning, this is not a Sunday school picnic. We are called to be soldiers in an army that has a captain, his name is Jesus Christ. He leads us into battle, and we're battling powers of darkness that have entrenched themselves in the hearts and minds of an entire society that walks in alienation to the ways and principles of God.

And Paul is saying, in effect, that God has given us weapons that are not carnal weapons. In other words, the battle that we're going to wage is not to be waged in our own reasoning, it's not to be waged in our own power, and it's not to be waged by our own strength. But he has put an inward working of God within us, if we truly are the church of Jesus Christ.

And the weaponry that God has given us is mighty, and that weaponry is the truth. And the truth coming from surrendered vessels has the power to pull down entrenched positions in people around us. In other words, a spoken word from a surrendered vessel can virtually demolish years of defenses and positions that the enemy has built up in somebody's life.

Casting down imaginations, he says. You leave the doors of this church, and we go out into the street, and we'll find that all types of imaginations, all types of strongholds and positions have been established by the enemy and by the natural man as well, in his own heart. But the Apostle Paul is talking about the power of God in a surrendered life.

That I will give you the power to go out and tread on serpents and scorpions and all the power of the enemy. You'll be able to walk out and cast down those imaginations. In other words, demolish, break the defenses of darkness, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.

But first now, before any of this is going to happen in the church, in verse 6 he says, we must have a readiness to revenge all disobedience. In other words, the desire, the ability to go out and to see the kingdom of God move forward, to see disobedience to God brought down, to see people surrender to the Lord. But this can only happen when our obedience is fulfilled.

We can't challenge disobedience towards God and others until our obedience, our thoughts, our lives, entrenched positions against the knowledge of God in us, have been challenged by the Holy Ghost and brought into submission to Christ. In other words, we have to be surrendered vessels to the purposes of

God. The world can't be challenged to surrender to Christ by a church that herself only knows a partial surrender to her Savior.

It can't happen. I believe the heart's cry of God for this generation, not believe, I know the heart's cry is for surrendered vessels, for people who would invite Christ to come and challenge every area of their heart and challenge every area of their life. The Apostle Paul says, the strongholds, he talks about strongholds, and he talks about these strongholds being imaginations and thoughts that have found a dwelling place or that have entrenched themselves in the lives of people.

I used to think that the imagination spoken of in this passage of Scripture just simply referred to as sporadic, float-by thoughts of the devil and the natural mind. Although it's true that we're sometimes barraged with thoughts that have nothing to do with the furtherance of God's kingdom in our lives, these thoughts in themselves can be resisted simply by keeping our minds focused on Christ and giving no place to the devil. In other words, don't open the door to him.

If he comes with a lying thought, just don't open the door. Recognize him and I suppose just say, there's no room at the inn and close the door and let him pass by. You don't have to entertain him.

It's only when we entertain the thoughts that come from darkness in the carnal heart that they become strongholds and entrenched positions that begin to shape our thinking. Paul says it, I guess, best in Ephesians 4, 27, he says, don't give place to the devil, neither give place to the devil. And I think that's fairly simple.

Now, in 2 Corinthians 10, verse 4, the apostle Paul speaks of a weaponry given to us through God, the purpose of which is to pull down strongholds, to bring them down. Now, what type of stronghold is he referring to? Webster's Dictionary defines a stronghold as a place that nature or man has made strongly defensible. In other words, it has become a refuge.

Paul is speaking to us about an inward working of God in our lives, the purpose of which is to pull down strongly defended places of refuge. Folks, whether we like it or not, in each one of our lives there are places in the heart that are not fully given to God. And God is after those places in His church.

God is after them in me and God is after them in your life. Every area of the heart that is not surrendered. Now, in 2 Corinthians 10, verse 5, he identifies these places as imaginations and high things that exalt themselves against the knowledge of God.

Now bear with me because I need to build a base before I get to the heart of what I'm going to be speaking on. He says these places that have to be brought down in our lives before we can revenge disobedience out there to the things of God are imaginations, casting down imaginations. Now the word in the original Greek text for imaginations is logismos and this is what it means.

Considerations and intentions which are hostile to the gospel. Now it's a shocking fact but in many lives of those who are called by the name of Christ there are considerations and intentions that have found a place in the heart and even though they may appear spiritual they are in fact hostile to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Their thoughts and intents, their plans, ambitions, dreams, even self-perceptions.

They have entrenched themselves in our character all of which Christ comes to overthrow as His truth takes up residency in our lives. He comes in to overthrow these things. He comes in to reveal them.

He comes in to rouse them out and to give us revelation of Himself. The greatest battle that we're fighting right now in this last generation is a battle for truth. Truth.

That truth would win out in the heart and truth would win out in the lives of God's people. That we'd be able to stand having no strongholds of the enemy in our lives. No secret agendas.

No self-perceptions, no plans, no dreams, no ambitions that are contrary to the gospel of Christ. But fully surrendered vessels. They say, Lord if I die, I die.

Whatever you want to do with my life, do it, oh God. That your kingdom may be furthered. That your name might be honored.

That men, women, and children may come to you. I remember praying as a younger preacher years ago. I said, oh God, I am so tired of watching men stand to steal trees in the wind.

Unbent and unmoved by the gospel that seems to be coming from my life. And I began to cry out to God. And the moment I cried out to God, He began the process of revealing strongholds.

We wouldn't think that they're strongholds. We're not talking necessarily about some of the more flagrant sins that you see very often in some of even God's people. But I'm talking strongholds like ambition.

I'm talking strongholds like unsurrendered plans. It's like the man who wants to be something before he comes to God. And then he comes to God, and now he still wants to be something, but he spiritualizes it.

He has entrenched an imagination in his heart. That imagination that's in his heart is contrary to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Because the Bible says, let this mind be in you, which was also in the Son of God, who being in the form of God, thought it not probably to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon himself the form of a servant.

I remember one time a young fellow, a young preacher phoning me, and he said, Pastor Carter, he said, God in prayer today has given me a revelation about myself. He said, I'm destined for greatness. And so I listened to him.

I didn't say a whole lot. Then I called him back a little while later. I said, we have a need in the church for somebody to clean the church during the week.

I said, would you be interested in that? I said, I believe that's the answer to what God has shown you. And all of a sudden he's very silent on the other end of the phone. I said, well, the Bible says if any man will be great among you, he will become your servant.

I said, in effect, he's responsible, so that's not quite what I had in mind. See, something had gotten into his heart. It can seem so spiritual, but it can be so against the very nature of Christ within us.

No man, Jesus said, can enter into a strong man's house and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man, and then he will spoil his house. Did you know that it's Christ's intention upon coming into your life to root out, expose, and destroy all false pathways? Everything within you that tries to substitute for God's truth and God's plan for your life. His intent is to come in to bind the strong man and spoil your goods.

In other words, take everything in you and I that's unlike him and literally throw it out the back door when he comes in to take up residency. In Jeremiah chapter 29, he says, I know the thoughts that I think towards you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you an expected end, and I will be found of you, saith the Lord, and I will turn away your captivity. Now keep your finger in 2 Corinthians 10 and go to Isaiah chapter 28 with me.

Isaiah chapter 28, it's a principle that was spoken to Israel, but has an application to us too as well. The prophet Isaiah is talking about the coming of Christ and his mission. Now it has an application to Israel, but you can also apply it to us as Christians.

In Isaiah chapter 28, verse 16, he says, Therefore, thus saith the Lord God, behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation of stone, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation, and he that believeth shall not make haste. Judgment also will I lay to the line and righteousness to the plummet, and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the water shall overflow the hiding place. Now look up just for a moment.

He's saying, I'm going to establish a stone, a foundation stone of truth. That truth is Jesus Christ. Did he not even identify himself in the New Testament as that stone? He said, whoever falls on this stone shall be broken, but whoever this stone falls on shall be ground to powder.

And he said, one of the ministries in effect of this stone is to lay judgment to the line. In other words, this stone will be absolute truth and righteousness to the plummet, and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies. Those who open their hearts to Christ, that he comes in, and the connotation is here, he comes in like a sweeping storm.

When the heart is open, sweeps away any place that we have found a refuge that's not of him. Anything that we have believed to be truth, but it's not truth. And the water shall overflow the hiding place.

All those secret corridors, all the secret chambers, things not even readily identifiable by our own natural mind. He will overflow these strongholds and these cities that we have established in our hearts. And he will go in there, and the washing of the water of the word will begin to challenge them, and begin to beat against them.

Just like water coming up on a seashore will move against the sandcastle that a child has constructed. And maybe not take it down the first time, maybe not the second, but it will eventually just drift it, pull it back out into the sea, and bring it down and make it level ground. He says in verse 18, your covenant with death shall be annulled.

In other words, all thinking of death is going to be taken away. Your agreement with hell shall not stand. When the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then you shall be trodden down by it.

Now stop there just for a moment. I believe with all of my heart that God's desire is to come into our hearts with such revelation that we are left undone. Just like the prophet Isaiah, when he's drawn into the presence of God, he sees the risen Christ, and in the revelation of God's holiness, he sees who he is without God.

And he says, woe unto me, I am undone. I'm a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips. I believe that's the purpose of God.

He says the overflowing scourge is going to pass through, and you shall be trodden down by it. You see, when Christ came into Jerusalem, He came into the temple, and the temple is, the business in the temple is carrying on just like it does every day. There are well-intentioned people in that temple.

There are money changers because there was a need. People were coming in to offer up grain offerings and peace offerings and sin offerings, and they're coming into the temple to worship God. They're coming from other places, and so there's a need to change money into the common currency.

So they were there, and they're providing a need in their own heart. They're the sellers of doves. These are people that were in the temple to sell as sacrifice for the poor who had come in, and so they're doing something, and every man in his own mind is doing some good thing.

And all of a sudden comes Jesus, the Son of God, into this temple, and with violence, although we understand that God is a God of love, and He never does anything outside of love, but He takes up a scourge of cords, the Scripture says, and He comes into the temple, and with violence, begins to overthrow anything and everything. And I'm sure there are people there saying, What is He doing? This has a purpose. This has a function.

This has been here for years. These people are contributing money to the treasury, and there's all these defenses and all these built-up reasonings as to why these things should be allowed in the temple. But He comes in with a scourge and overthrows the tables of the money changers and those that sell doves and everything else, and says, Get these things out of my Father's house, for it is written, My house shall be called a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves.

And I believe with all my heart that was a type and a shadow of what Jesus does when He comes into a life that has an open heart. We are the temple of the Holy Ghost now. The temple in Jerusalem, where it was or where it may even be rebuilt, is not the dwelling place of God.

We are now the dwelling place of God. And in the New Testament, the scripture says, God says, I scourge every son whom I receive. I come into your life, and you have built places in your life that you think are good.

They even have a religious reason to them, and they seem to have a function, and you're moving in directions that are contrary to my will, and you don't know it. But I come into your life, and my purpose of coming into your life is to scourge and to overthrow everything in your life that is unlike God. My Father, that is unlike the truth of the Word of God.

That you might become a vessel into honor. That you might become a house of prayer. That you might be solely, entirely, totally given over to my purposes.

That I might live in the midst of you. That I might pour out my life through you. That my voice might be heard.

That my touch might be felt in your hands. That I might be seen in your very countenance. That you might have the power to go and cast down every imagination that has exalted itself above the knowledge of God.

But this can't come until the temple is purified. It can't come until all religious things are taken out of the way. Until we're standing exposed before a holy God.

Whoever falls on this stone, he says, shall be broken. Look at verse 20. Here's what God does when he comes into your life.

Now this may not even seem like a scripture that should fit, but it does. He says, for the bed is shorter than a man can stretch himself on it. And the covering narrower than he can wrap himself in it.

Now he's talking about passing through with a scourge. And in effect he's saying, the bed, the place, your rest. You have established a place of rest that is not necessarily built on 100% truth.

And what he's saying, I'm going to make your bed shorter than you are. You ever tried to get comfortable on a bed with your feet hanging a half a foot or a foot over the end? No matter how you turn, no matter what you do, you're always aware that your feet are hanging over the end. And God's saying, I'm going to shorten up your bed.

The place where you lay, where you have found rest. The things you have found comfort in. I'm going to shorten it up and I'm going to make you uncomfortable.

And he says, you have a covering for yourself. And much of it is self-made. And he says, I'm going to make that covering narrower than you can wrap yourself in.

In other words, I'm going to make your bed short and I'm going to make your manky, if I can call it such, your blanket. I'm going to make your blanket small. And he says, your feet are going to stick out, you're not going to be able to get covered.

And finally you're going to get up and say, what's wrong? What's wrong? I used to be able to rest here and sleep here. I used to be warm here, I used to be comfortable here. But all of a sudden I've come to God and now I'm uncomfortable.

Something is beginning to change. You know what it is? God is in the midst of your life. He's come into the midst of your heart.

And he's not willing to share his living temple with any lie. He's not willing to share with things that are not of him. He says, I come to expose that which is not of me, says the Lord, that you may cast it off and seek that which is true and everlasting.

That you may put it away, even things that appear good. If they are insufficient, if they are not true, then God says put them away and begin to seek that which is true and everlasting. We would have to ask ourselves the question, now why does God do this? And why does the overthrow of our lives have to be so complete? Well, the answer is simple.

Paul says in Romans chapter 8 and verse 7, he says the carnal mind is enmity against God. It's the enemy of God. It's the opposite of the thinking of God, the natural man's mind.

For it is not subject to the law of God and neither indeed can be. In Romans chapter 7 verse 18, Paul says, I know that in me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing. Isaiah 55, 7 to 9, the Lord says, Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return to the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God that he will abundantly pardon.

Verse 8, he says, For my thoughts are not your thoughts, and neither are my ways your ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my

thoughts are higher than your thoughts. Hallelujah.

Throughout the history of the Bible, we see unsundered plans and ambitions that were hidden in the hearts of those who didn't find their fulfillment and purpose in God always leads in the end to devastation. Unsundered plans and ambitions, hidden things, will always lead to devastation. You know folks, you can have 85% truth in your heart, but it's the 15% lie that will kill you.

It's the 15% that's not given to God that will lead you down a path away from God in the long run. Look at Deuteronomy 31, I'll show you this. Deuteronomy Chapter 31, verse 19, the Lord is speaking through Moses to the children of Israel going into the place of promise.

Now listen to what he says in verse 19, he says, Now therefore write ye this song for you, and teach it. The children of Israel put it in their mouths that this song may be a witness for me against the children of Israel. He says, For when I shall have brought them into the land which I swear unto their fathers that floweth with milk and honey, and they shall have eaten and filled themselves in wax and fat, then will they turn to other gods and serve them and provoke me and break my covenant.

And it shall come to pass when many evils and troubles are befallen them. You see folks, that's always the end result of being unsundered to God. That this song shall testify against them as a witness, for it shall not be forgotten out of the mouths of their seed.

Now here's the key, he says, For I know their imagination, which they go about even now, before I have brought them into the land which I swear. And what God was saying in effect, he said, I see their hearts, and I know that they have not found their fulfillment in me. There are many, many unsundered areas of their heart, and because they have not found their fulfillment and purpose in me, there will come a time when they are fat, when they are full, when they have felt my glory and known my presence, that they will turn and begin to walk away.

Folks, backsliding doesn't happen in a day. Some people say, Oh, he was so on fire for God, living such a holy life, and all happened so quickly. No, it didn't happen quickly.

It was there a long, long time in the heart. It was an unsundered area, and God was after that area time and time and time again. And it may not even be an area related to the sin that finally ensnared him or her.

It's another area. It's something that God was after. And he was saying, You've not found your fulfillment in me.

I'm not your chiefest joy. You're not fully surrendered to me. You're not inviting me to come in and occupy every area of your life and your heart.

You've not given me charge of your future. You've not put your family into my hands. You've not laid everything out before me and offered it up to me as a living sacrifice.

That I may be glorified in you and through you, but you've held on to this area in your life, and you won't let it go. In many, I could get into specifics, but I don't want to get sidetracked, because when you get into specifics, then somebody else sitting here is saying, Well, this message doesn't apply to me, because he didn't mention my specific sin. Folks, there's 101 things I could talk about today that could have captivated your heart, and you could have absolutely covered them with religious garments, and they look so pure and so holy.

There are hundreds of rich young rulers in the church of Jesus Christ today who have come and they love their money, and they come to the house of the Lord and they give their life to Christ, and they still love their money, but they transfer and put all kinds of nice religious garments upon it, and they talk about good works and good deeds and being surrendered to God, but God knows they would never give it up. It owns the heart. He knows it.

There are men with ambition. Men with ambition are destroying the work of God throughout all of the Western world. They're totally given to ambition.

They want to be seen. They want to shine. They want to be known as some great one among the people, just like Simon the sorcerer.

They want all the power, but they don't want the cross of Jesus Christ. They're unsundered. They're not willing to become nothing that Christ might be seen.

They're not willing to stand out as fools that Christ might be glorified. They're not willing to pay the price of seeking Him and knowing Him and letting His truth work its way into their hearts. And so they stand and lead the people by the multitude into error and away from God.

The ultimate peril. He says, I know their imagination, which they go about. You remember the story when God took Ezekiel into Israel.

He said, I'm going to show you why I have to judge my people. And He bore it, in effect, a hole in the wall and showed him all the unclean things in the house of God. And He says, it goes even beyond this and showed him the ancients, the leaders of Israel.

And He said, look at them. And He took them into the chambers of their imagery. And in effect, what He was saying, look at all the unsundered imaginations, all the plans and ambitions in the minds of these men that are not birthed of me and have nothing to do with my kingdom.

This is why my house is going astray. This is why I have to bring judgment upon my people. Because men have stood before them who are unsundered to me.

They never invited me to come in and totally, completely occupy their heart and occupy their life. And therefore, they are led by these ambitions and plans, these secret things that they have made to appear holy. And the worst judgment of all in Deuteronomy chapter 29 that befalls those who walk in this way.

Deuteronomy chapter 29 verse 18. He says, Lest there should be among you a man or woman or family or tribe whose heart turns away this day from the Lord our God to go and serve the gods of these nations. Lest there should be among you a root that bears gall and wormwood.

In other words, lest there should be something still in you that is unlike Christ and you're not willing to let the Holy Ghost deal with it. It's a root. He says it's going to bear bitterness.

It's going to bear poison. He said, And it come to pass when he hears the words of this curse that he bless himself in his heart. Though I walk in the imagination of my heart.

What is the power that God gives to those who walk in truth? It's to cast down imaginations. The most deadly blindness I see in the scripture is a man who walks in the stubbornness of his own heart and says, I shall have peace. I shall have peace.

God is with me. I'm going to heaven even though he has an unsundered heart to the ways of God. Proverbs chapter 16 verse 25 says, There's a way that seems right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.

Now listen to me carefully. How right it might have seemed in the Garden of Eden as Satan came to Eve and said to her, You can be as God. You can be as God.

This came across as just a thought. The thought found a lodging place in Eve's heart and that thought became an imagination. And after it became an imagination it became an objective and consequently an action that brought such tragedy to the whole human race.

I've wondered as I was studying this if it's possible that it even seemed a spiritual thing to do. Did it seem a spiritual thing to Eve to partake of this tree of the knowledge of good and evil? Satan said, You shall be as God. Is it possible he convinced her that this is a desirable thing? And it was actually spiritual.

She tasted of it and said, Oh, it's good. She gave it to her. When she saw it was pleasant she gave it to her husband and said, You partake of it too.

Did it seem to them for a moment that they were on a spiritual journey? That somehow they were ascending when in reality they were in absolute rebellion to the revealed word of God? And folks, I can't help but wonder how many today with spiritual intent have plans, ambitions, considerations, inventions, intentions that are hostile to the gospel truth of Jesus Christ. And folks, I can't answer that for you. Only the Holy Ghost can reveal it.

And it can only be revealed to a heart that wants it to be revealed. A heart that says, Lord, I'm asking you, Holy Spirit. I prayed this last night after preparing this.

I got down on my knees in my office on my couch and I said, I call upon you, Lord. I call upon you to come into my heart and do a violent overthrow of every intent within me that has exalted itself above the knowledge of God. I call upon you, Jesus, to ride down that road into this temple and violently overthrow it.

Lord, do whatever you have to do to get my attention. If I'm thinking thoughts, if I'm planning plans, if I'm moving in a direction, if there's something within me, Lord, that you want to take out of me, I call upon you to violently overthrow it. I call upon you to come into my heart with a scourge and throw over the tables and cast it out of my life.

I believe that's the cry of a true child of God. I believe that with all of my heart. If we truly are the temple of Jesus Christ, then we cry out for that overthrow.

And we don't necessarily say, Lord, make it peaceful and don't cause me any pain. But Lord, do it, whatever you have to do. If you can't get through to me in this book, if you can't get through to me on my knees, then just get through to me whatever way you have to.

I want to honor you. I want fruit to be born into your kingdom. I want to have the power to stand to men of truth and cast down imaginations.

That the devil is planted in the hearts of people and that the natural mind has built up to avoid and elude the word of God that brings people to complete surrender. I don't want to stand as just another preacher preaching to steal trees that don't bend in the wind. Oh Lord, cast it down.

Bring it all into captivity. Enable me to love you with all my heart, my soul, my mind, and my strength. Enable me to love you with my mind, my thoughts.

Let my ways be established, David said. Search me, oh God. See if there's any wicked way in me.

Lead me in the ways of life everlasting. Paul says in Ephesians chapter 4, if you'll turn there just quickly with me. Ephesians chapter 4, verse 17.

He says, This I say therefore and testify in the Lord that you henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk in the vanity of their mind. Now this is a word to the church. He says don't walk in the futility of your mind.

Don't walk with an elevated thought life. Letting your own thoughts be exalted above the word of God. He says having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through ignorance that is in them.

These are the strongholds that Paul is speaking about in 2 Corinthians. Alienated, dark, because of the ignorance that's in them. Because of the blindness of their heart.

Who being past feeling have given themselves over to lasciviousness to work all in cleanness with greediness for that self-interest. But you have not so learned Christ if so be that you have heard and have been taught by him as the truth is in Jesus. That you put off concerning the former conversation the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts.

And be renewed in the spirit of your mind. Be renewed in the spirit of your mind. And put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

David, that beloved king of Israel before he died looked at his son Solomon in 1 Chronicles chapter 28 and verse 9. And he said something to Solomon that I believe that God speaks to every one of us today. And he says to him, My son, he said, Serve him with a perfect heart and a willing mind. Serve him with a perfect heart.

And let your mind, let your thoughts and in fact always be established by God. Solomon wrote it himself when he said, In all your ways acknowledge him and he shall direct your paths. He said, For the Lord searches all hearts and understands the imaginations of the thoughts.

In other words, Solomon, he said, You can't hide anything from God. Don't try to hide from God. Don't try to build a bulwark around a thought that is alien to the word of God.

If you seek him, he said, he will be found of you. But if you forsake him, he will cast you off forever. You see, Solomon couldn't hear this.

And when he went out in direct disobedience to the word of God and got silver and gold and got horses from Egypt and wives from Egypt, I wonder how he built his reasoning around that kind of disobedience. He became a stronghold in his life. He was doing so much right, but those few things he did wrong became the stronghold that blinded him and took him off in the latter part of his life when he could have brought Israel into such a place of glory.

He ended up splitting the kingdom and bringing Israel eventually into captivity. Now go to Luke chapter 1. Just go back to Luke chapter 1 with me. I'm going to conclude with this.

I'm talking about absolute surrender. I'm talking about vessels that have power to cast down imaginations, that have that weaponry of God that's in them. You see, the weaponry is of God.

It's not of ourselves. It's God working in us, pulling down strongholds, bringing into captivity every thought and imagination to obedience to Christ. Luke chapter 1 verse 35.

I'll call this the Mary principle. How do you walk with God in the sense that when his power and kingdom will advance in you and through you? In verse 35, the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee. The power of the highest shall overshadow thee.

Therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. Now verse 37. He said, For with God nothing shall be impossible.

And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord. Be it unto me according to thy word. There's the key.

That's why God could use Mary to birth his son. Not trying to reason it all out. No secret plans.

No secret ambitions. No thinking even in her heart, I believe of what kind of gain could come to me because I'm going to give birth in effect to the Son of God. But a pure heart, a pure vessel that says, Lord, just let it be done to me according to your word.

Whatever you want. Whatever your word says. Whatever you desire from me.

Let it be done. This is the type of life that will give birth to something in the kingdom of God. Where the purposes and plans of God can be forwarded through.

And again, she says, The handmaid, she says, My joy, my purpose, my life, my ambition is fulfilled in knowing that your plan is moving forward in and through my life. I surrender to your will. And listen to her song in verse 46.

And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord. My spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior. For he has regarded the lowest state of his handmaiden.

He looked down upon me in my lowest state. For behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For he that is mighty has done to me great things.

And holy is his name. His mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation. He has showed strength with his arm.

He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. Those who have agendas, secret things, secret plans that are contrary to the word of God, says he has scattered them in the imagination of their hearts. He has put down the mighty from their seats and exalted them of low degree.

There's got to be a cry. If we're going to go into revival, if we want to call it revival or an outpouring of God, I know we don't like the word revival. The cry has got to be Lord Jesus come and overthrow my heart.

Come and overthrow it. There are some people sitting here today you know what needs to be overthrown and there are others you're not sure. But somehow the Holy Spirit is speaking to you and saying there are plans, there are dreams, there are ambitions, there are unsundered things that keep you from finding my strength.

That keep you from being able. How could you stand and ever tell somebody to be surrendered to God if there's an unsundered area in your life? How would your words or mind have any power? It'd be nothing but just another hypocritical religious exercise. That's all it would be.

There's got to be truth behind it. There's got to be a life behind it. Cast down Lord strongholds of self.

Cast down any plans that I have that are contrary to your word and to your will. And bring my thoughts into the obedience of Christ. Lord lead me, guide me, deliver me from self and let me find my absolute fulfillment in you and you alone.

That is the prayer of my heart. Last night I got on my knees and cried this out to God. I wrote it down.

I cried it out to the very depths of my heart. I said God let me find my fulfillment. My absolute everything in you and in you alone.

I don't want any plans. I don't want to think about the future. Sufficient is the evil of this day that I have to get through and the things that I have to fight today.

But I want to stand and have the power of God operating in my life to such a degree that God gives me the authority through his spoken word to cast down strongholds. Casting down imaginations. Pulling down strongholds.

Casting down imaginations. Bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. I read in biographies of men and women of God greatly used in days gone by.

How they would stand and there would be crowds of three, four, five thousand sometimes or more. And they would stand and preach the word of God and the hardest of hearts would begin to melt. Do you want to know why that is? Because they were surrendered.

I believe that with all my heart they were surrendered. Truth was in them. Truth was coming out of them and God was moving through their lives.

And the entrenched positions of darkness were beginning to be pulled down and brought into captivity and the thoughts of God were having preeminence in those meetings. The defenses of generations were crumbling into the dust and men and women saw their need of God. Hallelujah.

I am not satisfied until God does that fully in my life. And I hope with all my heart that you are not satisfied. I hope you are not satisfied to be able to sit in your office and have people gather around you all day unconcerned about what you believe and who you are in Christ.

I hope you are not satisfied to walk in your neighborhoods and see young men and young women and children and families going to hell almost ignorant to the fact that you are even there and unconcerned about your words. I pray with all my heart that in Times Square Church we would be a people so consumed with the desires of God that when we open our mouths to speak even if it's the softest spoken word that strongholds begin to tremble and fall. This is not a thing that comes because of zeal.

You can muster all the zeal that your natural man can bring to the surface. It's nothing to do with zeal. It has absolutely nothing to do with knowledge.

It has everything to do with an unsundered heart that's full of God. You can speak with stuttering lips. You can speak in broken English.

You can do it any way that God will allow you to do it. But if Christ is in your inward parts strongholds begin to break and hell begins to tremble. Hallelujah.

Hallelujah. God grip us. Holy Spirit grip us.

Grip us. Every area of our heart. Every area of our life.

I'm going to give an altar call this morning. That altar call is for everybody that's in this house today. And the Holy Spirit has spoken to you.

I don't want you to be persuaded by just the intellect of man. If that happens then you'll go out the door and you won't change. But the Holy Spirit has spoken to you.

And the Holy Spirit has said to you there is something I'm after in your heart. I'm after something in your life. Will you invite me to come in with the scourge? Will you invite a violent overthrow? A violent overthrow.

That's what it speaks about in Isaiah. Will you invite a violent overthrow of everything that's unlike me? That I might be established as the very preeminent one in your life. In your thoughts, your mind, your heart.

The very direction of your life might be in me and through me. If that's you today I'm going to ask everybody to stand in the balcony go to either exit and come down to this altar. The main sanctuary.

Would you slip out and would you come? And we're going to pray together and ask God to take the scourge of His word. God is establishing a people of truth in Times Square Church. A people of truth that's sown within me.

We're not going to settle for less than knowing Him and walking in Him and seeing fruit beginning to abound to His honor and to His glory. To His kingdom. Hallelujah.

If you're unsaved you join these. If you're not saved you can be saved today. You're backslidden come home to God.

He'll receive you. He'll restore you. Determine in your heart that you're going to live as a man or woman of truth.

Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Come and overthrow my heart.

Cast down the strongholds of self. Cast down any plans that I have that are contrary to your word and your will. Bring my thoughts into the obedience of Christ.

Lord lead me guide me deliver me from self and let me find my fulfillment my absolute fulfillment in you and you alone. Make me a person of truth. Let truth abound in my inward parts.

I desire to be given holy to you. I invite you to come in and overthrow all imaginations considerations ambitions plans that have found a lodging place in my heart. I have made them defended places of refuge.

Make me uncomfortable. Speak to my heart day and night. Take them all away.

May only truth pure truth in Jesus Christ abound in and through my life. I want to surrender to you. Lord God when I speak give me authority let spiritual authority be established in my life that when I speak your word kingdoms of darkness are taken into captivity.

The thoughts of the devil and the natural man come crashing down to earth and God your kingdom is built and established in the hearts of the people above all else I desire to bear fruit in my life for your honor and your glory. Lord let it be done. I thank you for hearing me and responding to my cry.

Hallelujah. Thank you Lord.

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