

Let's Dismantle Our Towers

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[0 : 0 0] You will remember that, in fact, if you were here last week, you may remember that we're doing the prayers for those who are being baptized as adults on page 536 in the prayer book, the maroon-colored prayer book, the second of the two prayers, the second part of one prayer, probably, and it reads, cast out of their hearts every evil imagination, everything which exalts itself against the knowledge of thee, and bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

So you have, again, this picture of someone standing on the threshold of their confession of faith in Jesus Christ, and you have the company of the people to whom they will belong in Christ, and you have that company praying, cast out of their, his heart or her heart, or their hearts, or our hearts.

Every evil imagination, everything which exalts itself against the knowledge of thee, and bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

Now, you keep one thumb in there and turn in your Bibles to 2 Corinthians chapter 10, verse 4. 2 Corinthians chapter 10, verse 4.

3 Corinthians chapter 10, verse 4. 3 Corinthians chapter 10, verse 4. And you, uh, perhaps could read verses 4 to 6 with me.

[1 : 5 6] For the weapons of our warfare are not worldly, but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments. 3 Corinthians chapter 11, verse 4.

4 Corinthians chapter 11, verse 4. 4 Corinthians chapter 11, verse 4. 5 Corinthians chapter 11, verse 4. and we now I have again over this passage of scripture a strange sense of reluctance to preach on it because I don't I'm making assumptions about you that you're not prepared to hear it anyway so why should I waste my time and yours and I'll just see how much of it I'm going to waste I first let me just point out to you that your prayers should be informed by the scriptures and this prayer is certainly informed by the scriptures since it's almost it's just turning into a prayer 2nd Corinthians chapter 10 verse 5 now if you read if you read the text in 2nd Corinthians of verse 5 you will hear the echoes of that prayer where it says

Paul says we destroy arguments every proud obstacle to the knowledge of God and take every thought captive to obey Christ now it seems the thing that I wonder about is that in our culture and in our society in our world we create the illusion at least that our minds our thoughts should not be captive to anybody that we should be free to think what we want to think to do what we want to do to go where we want to go to be what we want to be and if religion that insidious form of crippling paralysis for the totality of human potential comes along and deliberately takes you captive and brings you a prisoner of war under the obedience of Christ have you not been crippled for life lots of people would say that you have that you have bowed down you have obeyed the wrong thing you have crippled that real potential that you have as a person well let me just remind you of one or two things leading up to that by looking at 2nd Corinthians chapter 4 verse sorry 2nd Corinthians 10 verse 4 where it says have you got it there 173 the weapons of our warfare are not worldly but have divine power to destroy strongholds

Paul is talking about another kind of warfare and he says that the characteristic of the weapons that are used in the warfare that he is engaged in are not worldly weapons but they are that they are weapons which have divine power to destroy strongholds and the word strongholds is a very interesting word and what it means one of the ways that they the pictures they have of it it's not the mighty fortress who is our God it's a stronghold which is a fortification against God it's almost as though you build your tower higher and higher and higher and higher and higher and higher and you become more and more independent of God more and more you understand that God hasn't handled the world just properly more and more you realize that God has made mistakes more and more you realize that there is a basic reason in the world which is more powerful than God and wiser than God more and more you begin to realize that you understand the world better than the God of Scripture does that you understand the world better than the God who in Scripture created it and redeemed it and you're building your tower higher and higher so that in in one so that the only way you can go at this tower is for somebody to attack it with a view to overthrowing it and you see that it happens to us all and if it doesn't happen to us

I mean we achieve money we achieve power we achieve social standing we achieve recognition we achieve all these things and we reason that this is that this is an appropriate response to a rather superior person that is me and we build and build and build and we keep reinforcing the wall and making sure that it doesn't crumble and making sure that it can resist any attack and making sure that it will stay well in the life of a parish like that like this there isn't a day goes by that you don't hear alas Joel his tower has fallen alas Mary her tower has come crashing to the ground alas for this group that they thought were so invincible the business that was going to prosper in the 90s when nobody else did and they've come tumbling down and we're taught to build these towers in our society and I would say that in most of our professional groups we have built a tower which gives standing and integrity and meaning and the exaltation of the exercise of reason so that we cannot let God interfere in our lives we can't take into consideration anything that would threaten the tower that we have built and Paul gladly sets out with that purpose in mind when he says

[8 : 56] I have a weapon which isn't a worldly weapon but has divine power to destroy these towers in which we live now you I think have to admit that our world has not got past the point where the strongest argument we have is the armaments we hold you know those are the weapons we ultimately depend on we can send in tanks we can send in bombs we can send in rockets we can send in automatic rifles we ultimately solve our problems that way that's the only way we know how to do and the highest courts in the world and the highest people in the world say the only way you can deal with this problem is and they produce worldly weapons of enormous sophistication in order to preserve the castle that they have built and the cause that they represent and so Paul says my business is to destroy those towers to destroy that dependence and so how does he do it look again at chapter 10 verse 5 we destroy arguments every proud obstacle to the knowledge of God you see what has happened in this in this passage is that the knowledge of God we ultimately know more than this now this isn't an attack on reason somebody went after me about that already today it's not an attack on reason but what it is saying is that if you take self-will and reason and put them together then the result is that you have a tower which resists the knowledge of God that

I don't I don't I don't know how to explain this to you but I you know when feminists get together they build a tower and when fundamentalists get together they build a tower and when all of us build a tower based on reason so that we can confidently say to the rest of the world we know better than God I know that by saying feminists people get upset but I I want to upset you I don't want to pick on that group in particular because we each have our own but what we do with it is we build a tower in defiance of God and we rationalize it we work it out we exalt ourselves we say that we are above the common herd and we understand what they don't understand and so we create these towers

I think labor unions do the same thing I think big business does the same thing you want to work for us you think the way we think and that's that's plain ordinary good sense for a lot of people but these towers that we build we then come to depend on and then we become willfully defiant of God and we don't want to submit to him or to what he wants for us and so Paul says we have our job is to go in there and carry on this warfare and destroy these high towers to destroy every argument every proud obstacle to the knowledge of God and take every thought captive to Christ now

I think where the offense comes in this is that if Christ is not the eternal son of God if he is not the incarnate God if he is not the one whom God has given to us to bear our sins in his body on the tree if he's not that and our minds are taken captive to the obedience of him of Christ then we are fools no question about it but if he is who he says he is then the work that Paul is describing is the most important work in the world that our minds should be taken prisoners and brought to Christ and put under and come under submission to him and under his obedience under the obedience of Christ now the world offers you the ingredients for building lots of towers proud obstacles to the knowledge of God and lots of people have climbed up those towers and they defend themselves in those towers and in that way they defy

God and two verses that I want to show you just to conclude this really but I because it seems the last verse of Romans chapter 8 is to tell you that the warfare that Paul is engaged in will ultimately succeed and the tower you built the proud obstacle you build in resistance to the power and purpose of God will ultimately crumble and Paul says in verse 39 of chapter 8 of Romans nor height nor depth nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord that Paul's arguments with spiritual weapons which can throw down the obstacles you know the

[15 : 53] I mean our world is full of such obstacles proud obstacles to the knowledge of God and those ultimately will be thrown down and ultimately nothing will be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ nothing will and if you've taken your life and you have wasted it building a tower in which you can defy the sovereignty of God and the Lordship of Jesus Christ be sure that that tower is going to come tumbling down because ultimately there is nothing that will be able to resist the love of God in Christ so that when at the end of the service I stand up and say the peace of

God which passes all understanding peace comes because the warfare is over and the obstacles have come tumbling down the peace of God which passes all human understanding human understanding can build towers but they don't compare with that which God has done in Christ and so it passes all human understanding keep your heart and mind in the obedience of Christ that's what it means in the knowledge and love of God and of his son Jesus Christ that's what we pray every day we leave church that we might be brought humbly before God and that we might we might be humbled before him we may be brought captive into the obedience of

Christ now you see the weapon that Paul has to win this warfare is the revelation that God has made of himself in Jesus Christ so that what you do is you get human reason which can build a tower and God's revelation which brings it crashing to the ground so Paul says build your life on the revelation that God has made of himself in Jesus Christ and don't waste your life building a tower which might ultimately come crumbling down I don't think we can escape being involved in tower building but I think we can know what it is to be personally and corporately as those who belong to Jesus Christ obedient to Jesus Christ that's what we need to know and you see that's why amidst all the pride and wisdom of

Greece and the philosophers and all the super apostles that came in on the church in Corinth to try and tell them that they were wrong Paul says I am resolved to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified because this knowing this is entirely different than any conclusion you can arrive at by the exercise of human reason ultimately you can't build a tower that's big enough ultimately we are humbled by the revelation of God in Jesus Christ and I pray for for myself and I pray for you individually and all together that you may humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God so that in due time he may exalt you

I pray that you and I may learn not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think I pray that you and I may learn to to humble ourselves before people of low estate because while they may not have the realities and the high towers of reasonable defiance of God reasoned willful defiance of God those people may have grasped in their hands the revelation which God has made of himself and of his love in Jesus Christ on the cross that's why when you come into church you're asked to get down on your knees you're asked to bow your head you're asked to close your eyes you're asked to be part one of another you're asked to acknowledge your membership one of another you are intended not to prove yourself superior to one another but to humble yourselves before one another and that's because proper condition for us to come to worship is as those who have been taken prisoner and brought into obedience to Christ that the grace of

[21 : 47] God has worked in our lives to cast out of our hearts every evil imagination everything which exalts itself against the knowledge of thee and to bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ amen can we pray let us pray we will be using the wine colored book of common prayer we have heard God's word in faith let us now respond in prayer Lord we rejoice with the psalmist who says how good it is to give thanks to you to sing in your honor to proclaim your constant love every morning and your faithfulness every night

God we thank you for the privilege of gathering here together this morning as your family in peace Lord grant that we may live out your covenant not as an obligation or a burden but as a gracious gift of the spirit grant the church wisdom to recognize the new life that is of the spirit grant us discernment to know the passing attractions that are not of the spirit and to dismiss them grant that your spirit may give joy and life to all Christians as we seek your will Lord in your mercy God our hearts ache as we hear the brutality and conflict in so many nations around the world especially former Yugoslavia Somalia and South Africa we pray fervently that peace justice and harmony may be restored we pray that your church may become a means of peace and reconciliation

Lord in your mercy hear our prayer we remember all those in our midst who suffer in mind body or soul those who are lonely those who are anxious we remember especially Mildred Wilson Bruce McKetty Gay Johnson Fred McFarland and Ben Thomas let us remember in silence others known to us remember also the family of Stacy and Frank Angeletto who this week experienced the death of their infant son Michael uphold them and Sandra

Hebert who is a member of this congregation draw an eye to them in their bereavement uphold them God with your spirit Lord bind us to all who suffer and help us to show them true love and caring Lord in your mercy hear our prayer we remember all those who are traveling at this time let us pray together the prayer on page 54 of our book of common prayer page 54 at the bottom of the page together O God our heavenly father who art present in thy power in every place preserve we beseech thee all who travel by land water or air surround them with thy loving care protect them from every danger and bring them in safety to their journey's end through

Jesus Christ our Lord God we pray for this parish we pray for our presence in this community that we would bring hope and reconciliation and that all would find here a true spirit of acceptance and forgiveness we praise you God for your guidance in the affairs of our church let us pray together in conclusion the prayer for the parish on page 44 of our book of common prayer together O God the Holy Ghost sanctifier of the faithful sanctify this parish by thine abiding presence bless those who minister in holy things enlighten the minds of thy people more and more with the light of the everlasting gospel bring erring souls to the knowledge of God our

[27 : 13] Savior and those who are walking in the way of life keep steadfast unto the end give patience to the sick and afflicted and renew them in body and soul guard from forgetfulness of thee those who are strong and prosperous increase in us thy manifold gifts of grace and make us all to be fruitful in good works O blessed spirit whom with the father and the son together we worship and glorify one God world without end amen and continue to pray and turn if you will in your BAS the green book to page 240 239 page 239 first hear the comfortable words of our Savior Christ saith to all that truly turn to him come unto me all that labor and are heavy laden and I will refresh you

God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son to the end that all that believe in him should not perish but have eternal life Saint Paul said this is a true saying and worthy of all to be received that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners but Saint John said anyone sin we have an advocate with the Father Jesus Christ the righteous he is the propitiation for our sins not for ours own but also for the sins of the whole world let us humbly confess our sins to almighty God almighty God father59 his son Phantom September vanviaibleificación pasaronoo

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Amen.