

The importance of good mental health

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[0 : 00] If you'd like to turn in your Bibles with me to 2 Corinthians chapter 10. 2 Corinthians chapter 10 and verse 3, verse 3 to 5 in particular, but we'll begin at verse 3.

2 Corinthians 10, beginning at verse 3. Now hear God's word.

For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but have divine power to destroy strongholds.

We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God and take every thought captive to obey Christ.

Okay, I'll read verse 5 again. It's in the context of destroying strongholds. And we do it, this is how we do it, by destroying arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God and take every thought captive to obey Christ.

[1 : 40] Well, this morning's message was about the fact that if restoration is going to happen in the life of God's people, then it's only going to happen if God does it.

God restores his people for his own glory. But when his people have been saved and have been redeemed and are his, he gives his people wisdom.

He gives his people instruction. And the best way to think of instruction and wisdom as a form of protection, the best way to think about it, or at least a way to think about it, is the same way a mom would say to her little boy, right, you're walking to school for the first time this morning, and when you get to your first crossing, you make sure you stop and you look and you listen.

And the reason I want you to do that is because I want you to stop before you cross, lest you get knocked over. I want you to look before you cross to see whether or not there are any cars coming. And I want you to listen just in case there's a car around the corner that you can't see, but nevertheless, I want you to be aware of that.

And so the child may not realize this, but what he ought to realize is that that instruction, that wisdom is his protection if only he would listen to it, if only he would pay attention and take heed of that word.

[3 : 10] And so when God instructs his believers, when God instructs his people, when God gives his people wisdom, and you say, well, how does God protect us?

Okay. God doesn't always take us from pavement A and lift us up across the road above the height of any car or lorry and then put us down on the other side of the road.

But often as Christians, we tend to believe that if God is going to protect us, that is how he's going to do it. He's going to divinely act in that way where he just grabs us and holds us and up we come and over we go and I'll drop you down where it's safe.

But of course, biblically speaking, while that is definitely true, it's not true all the time. God protects his people by instruction.

God protects his people by wisdom. And the way that we're protected by that is by listening and paying attention and doing it, being committed to being doers of the word and not just hearers only.

[4 : 15] Now, having said that, this is what we need to keep in mind, bearing in mind that this passage is all about a mind. It's all about what a believer thinks.

Paul is concerned about what this church thinks and how this church thinks, but he may have a few particular believers in mind. And so it's also true that what we think as an individual is also really, really important.

We can't just rely on the thoughts of others. Even if we believe what others say, but we're unsure ourselves, the things that's going to trip us up are the things where we're not convicted on, that we're not convinced are true.

As I was saying this morning, there's nothing worse than wanting to be able to give an encouraging Bible verse to somebody else, but you're having great difficulty believing it yourself.

And so you don't do it, not because it isn't true, but because you yourself are struggling with the truth of it. You know it's true, but it's just not penetrating. And that's an issue of the mind.

[5 : 21] It's an issue of doubt. It's an issue of faith. And so these things really do matter. And so tonight, this is a message regarding your mental health and my mental health as believers.

The battle that Paul has in mind here is the battle for the mind. And he's saying to this Corinthian church, the reason you are losing the battle in your Christian walk is because you've already lost the battle in the mind.

Okay? The reason you're losing the battle in life, out there in the physical world, is because you've already lost the battle in the mind. There's a particular stronghold in your mind that stops you from obeying God.

There's a particular stronghold in your mind that stops you from trusting God. There's a particular stronghold in your mind where the only opening is for the lies that the world wants to tell you.

You know, come over here, it'll be different. Come over here, you'll get what you want. Come over here, you know. It's a bit like Satan and Jesus. You can have all of this and you can have it now without the cross, you know.

[6 : 31] On tap. Blessing on tap. But, of course, they're lies. They're not true. But believers believe them, unfortunately. So, Paul says, verse 3. Verse 3 is in contrast to verse 2.

Verse 2, some believers are walking according to the flesh. That means that they're walking in a way as if they don't believe in God and don't follow God.

They're just doing what the world does. Now, that's dangerous for a believer. Not because it's, you know, it's sinful and God doesn't like it. It's not healthy for the believer to be submerged in a world that doesn't follow God.

And we think we can dip a toe in the world. The trouble is, is the current is so strong that even dipping a toe, we are taken away with it.

But we think we can handle it. So, we dip a toe every now and then in the flow of the world. But we end up getting taken downstream with it. So, Paul states, verse 3, you know, though we walk in the flesh, that is, we've got a normal existence.

[7 : 39] Our bodies are bones and flesh. You know, we've still got the old desires. We still have to make it through this life. We don't walk according to the flesh. In other words, that yes, we've got the same body.

Yes, we've still got some of the same sinful desires. But they're not the things that you should pay attention to. Now, already you've begun to see, or you should be beginning to see, that when all of the Christian's difficulties at this level is with him or herself.

Imagine for a minute that the world was perfect. Okay, just imagine for a minute that the world was perfect. You would still have these difficulties. The difficulties of dealing with yourself.

And that's what Paul is addressing here. So, we're not to walk according to the flesh because we're a spiritual person. We're someone who belongs to Jesus. So, we can't rely on the old ways.

We have to rely on faith and trust in God. We have to rely on God himself. Our normal existence just has a whole bunch of limitations that are just not up to the task of allowing us to live faithfully.

[8 : 52] It's a whole number of things. You know, Proverbs speaks of, you know, how pleasurable things can turn out to be really bad for you.

So, for those of you who like going to bed at night and like waking up in the morning, who like your sort of, you know, four, six, eight hours of sleep, whatever you get.

Okay, that's pretty healthy. But for those who have an inordinate desire for sleep, you know, where they just want to, that's incredibly bad for a Christian.

It was incredibly bad for everyone. But that's what happens. It gets into your mind. It gets into your behavior. And before you know it, you just, you've dipped a toe and you've been taken away.

And so, Paul says, verse 4, that we have to deal with these strongholds. And the only way to deal with these strongholds is not to wage war according to the flesh, but according to the divine power.

[9 : 50] Not only in our life, but of course in the lives of others. And so, what is a stronghold then? If we're to wage war against a stronghold, what is a stronghold? Well, in simple terms, a stronghold happens when you believe a lie.

That's a stronghold. A stronghold is a lie that you are believing. Now, at this point, we don't know where the lies come from. The lie could have come from the world, the flesh, the devil. It could have come from a friend. But essentially, it is a lie that you are believing to be true. Now, you could believe it to be true for a whole number of reasons, but it is a particular type of lie that can stop the world from believing the gospel.

That's a stronghold. So, for instance, there are some views in the world such as science is key, and science is very good for a whole number of things.

Science isn't bad. It's actually really good. Think of all the modern medicines. Think of all the things. It's actually really good. But when science becomes an ultimate answer, it then becomes a stronghold to the gospel itself.

[11 : 05] So, it's not that science is wrong, but believing that science is an ultimate answer for the future is a lie. And when you hold on to that lie, it then becomes a stronghold to any advancements of the gospel in somebody's life.

And so, the only way to bring down those strongholds is with these divine powers, and we'll get to that in a minute. The divine powers, verse 5, are to destroy arguments, and they are to destroy every lofty opinion.

So, let's begin with the argument. Have you ever sat down with yourself and argued? You ever had an argument with yourself? Yeah, a few nodding heads.

Okay, this is not unusual to have an argument with yourself. The fact that you have can be in two minds about something is, in one sense, especially when you're saved, is the tension between you wanting to take over and you really wanting to submit to Jesus.

And so, you wake up in the morning, and it's depending on which side of the bed you get up. Do you want to be like Jesus today, or do you not want to be like Jesus today? Do you want to submit to God today, or do you not want to submit to God today?

[12 : 20] That's the choice that every single one of us faces every time we wake up in the morning. There's that argument. And so, only these divine powers that God has given us is being able to defeat that kind of argument that says, let's have a day off of following Jesus today.

Now, the argument wouldn't be put that bluntly, but that's effectively what it leads to. Let's stay in bed an extra couple of hours. It sounds, I can do it, there's no pressures, it's my day off.

Okay, how do you destroy that type of logical argument? It makes sense, you can do it, but how do you get yourself out of bed, for instance?

Well, the only way to do it is to be able to use these divine powers to overcome that stronghold, because the stronghold is keeping you where you are. You're not strong enough to go against it. Then he says, destroy every lofty opinion also raised against the knowledge of God. Now, when a person has a lofty opinion, it simply means that that person thinks that they believe and know better than God.

[13 : 29] Now, it's not hard also to find in your own life a time when you will be willing to admit that at this point, I really did think I knew better than God.

Well, that's a lofty opinion. And that, again, is another stronghold. So strongholds are not just lies that you believe, but they are lies that have got a really good argument.

Okay, they are lies that can argue with you. They are lies that can actually give you a run for your money. Okay, they're not just an easy straw man pushover lie that you can get rid of really quickly.

No, these are lofty opinions. These are really powerful arguments. They're lies, but they are powerful arguments. And so you can't dismiss this lie quickly because they're hard to get rid of.

And so the only way to get rid of them is with the divine power, the divine instruments that God has given to his people.

[14 : 30] And we'll get to that in a minute. This past week, you may have heard that the once great Muhammad Ali, formerly known as Cassius Clay, boxing heavyweight champion of the world, died.

Being a boxing fan, I absolutely love boxing, though I'd never get in a ring. If I did, I'd probably never get out of it ever again.

But, you know, I don't agree with people hitting each other, but there's something about, you know, I justify it with David being a man of war and stuff like that. But there you have it.

And Muhammad Ali died, but it was said of Muhammad Ali that he won the fight even before he started fighting. That he could beat his opponent with the mind games before he beat his opponent in the ring.

It was actually said of him that the reasons why he did beat his opponents in the ring was because he first beaded his opponents in the mind. Now, believe it or not, but that is a thoroughly biblical truth.

[15 : 40] That is thoroughly biblical. That you will always be defeated physically, in the flesh, when you have first been defeated in the mind.

Now, the fact that the world understands this, and the fact that the world uses this and manipulates people with it, that if they can get inside your mind, that they can somehow influence control over you.

It's wrong, but unfortunately, it is definitely real. There are manipulators out there. It's not right that they do it. It's not right that they take a biblical truth, not that they would know it's a biblical truth, but it is a truth, and then twist it for their own means.

That's exactly what the devil does. It's called manipulation. It's wrong, but unfortunately, it is definitely real. But it is a thoroughly biblical idea to understand the principle that if you are defeated in your mind, you will be defeated in the flesh.

Paul argues this in Romans 12. After he preaches the gospel to the church or tells them, look, let's be clear on the gospel, the next thing he says in terms of application, Romans 12, is be transformed.

[16 : 56] Oh, how am I to do that? You be transformed by the renewing of your mind. So the mind's incredibly important. Be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

Back in chapter seven, Paul has a dilemma. He has a big issue. In other words, he knows exactly how he ought to live, but he's failing to do it. He knows what he wants to do.

He wants to do all the right things for God, but then he gets up in the morning and he fails to do them, and he's trying to work out, why is this happening to me? And this is what he says.

Because there's another law in him waging war against his mind. In other words, he doesn't say it's waging war against my heart.

He doesn't say it's waging war against my affections. He doesn't say it's waging war against my desires. He says it's waging war against my mind. Now, why? Because if you get into a person's mind, you get the rest of them.

[17 : 56] And that's what Paul's saying. That the mind is incredibly important to be transformed through the gospel for God. Why? Because whatever gets your mind gets you.

And you're down and you're out and the count of ten is gone and you're not getting up. Sometimes you do. And sometimes you don't.

So what Paul is saying here is that when a Christian is defeated in their walk, is defeated in following Jesus, they have first been defeated in the battle of the mind.

They have lost that battle. They think they have lost the physical battle. They think they have lost the actual battle with the temptations, the hands, the seeing, the touch, and all of that.

But Paul's saying, you lost it way before that. Way before you thought you actually lost it, you lost it. Because you lost it in your mind before you actually lost it in practical sense.

[19 : 02] And so when people don't think about what they're doing, what do they do? They make mistakes. And how often have we said to someone, think about what you're doing or you're going to make a mistake.

Concentrate on what you're doing or you're going to make a mistake. And Paul's saying in Romans 7 and Romans 12, be renewed by the transforming of your mind. Why? Because the Christian life is a difficult life. Think about what you're doing or you're going to make a mistake.

Because whatever gets your mind gets you. I'm going to give you an illustration. Think about Solomon. One of the things that have always puzzled me about Solomon is the fact that he prayed for wisdom when he could have prayed for anything.

And because God was so pleased that he prayed for wisdom, God gave him everything else. Now think about this for a moment. Not only do you get wisdom, in which he wrote Ecclesiastes in Proverbs, not only do you get all of that wisdom and you'd be happy with that, but he gets everything else.

He gets material wealth. He gets a good life. He gets good food. He just gets everything. And so here's the question that no doubt you have always asked. How is it, how is it, that Solomon, with all of his incredible wisdom, could still make such tragic and horrendous mistakes?

[20 : 18] Ever thought about that? How? Like he's called the wisest man in the world.

And yet look at the tragedy that came upon his life. Look at the mistakes that he has made. So how is it possible that Solomon, with all that incredible wisdom, that it could not prevent him from making such a mistake over and over again?

Just, how do you figure that one out? Well, I think there is an answer and I think the answer is more simple than complicated. And that is because wisdom can exist in a person's life, but it can exist separated from the mind and separated from the heart.

It seems to only operate when we fear God. In the same way, think about it, that the reason why water flows from the mountain to the stream, okay, or that is a stream, from the mountain to the valley, from the higher ground to the lower ground is because of gravity.

Okay, that's the only reason, it seems. Okay, so the reason why it flows from the higher ground to the lower ground is gravity. So water flows in that direction because of gravity.

[21 : 38] And what Proverbs seems to be indicating is that wisdom only ever flows from the higher person, God, to the lower person, you, through fear in him.

And when you don't fear God and don't acknowledge God in all your ways, guess what's not flowing in your life? Wisdom. And so I think it's quite explainable why Solomon, in all of, with all the wisdom that he had, okay, the trouble was the wisdom wasn't flowing.

Okay, it wasn't flowing from God. I don't think, I don't think you, wisdom is inherently yours. I think you have to be tapped into wisdom. I think the Bible says that wisdom comes from God and the only way it comes from God is if you're constantly connected to God through fearing him.

In other words, God doesn't deposit wisdom in your life and off you go, you've got it for the rest of your life. I don't think it works like that. I think the way that it clearly works is that wisdom works in your life through the channel of fearing God and that's how you get the constant supply and that's how you don't make mistakes and are protected.

But the moment you turn your fear away from God then wisdom doesn't flow or at least it doesn't flow to you. So I think the answer is simple.

[22 : 59] That it's all about our relationship with God. It's all about where our mind and where our heart is. But in terms of the battle you need to understand this. When boxers get into a ring they fight somebody else.

When soldiers go to war they fight somebody else. But when a Christian has to fight this battle who are they fighting?

They're fighting themselves. They're having to fight themselves. They're having to go to war against themselves. they're having to go to war against the part of them that doesn't want to follow God. Against the part of them that doesn't want to obey God. That's where the battle takes place. And we're not ready for that type of battle because normally we understand battles in terms of fighting somebody else.

but what Paul is saying no the greatest battle for your Christian walk and Christian mind is the battle that you have against yourself. That's what Paul says I think in Romans 7 and Romans 12 and I think most clearly here in 2 Corinthians.

[24 : 09] It is a mental health issue. So the issue is a stronghold. The lies that you believe that stop you living faithfully. The answer is the divine power.

Now what is this divine power? Because Paul doesn't actually tell us what they are. He doesn't actually tell us what the weapons of our warfare are. So because the Bible will never allow us to guess and the Bible doesn't allow that the answer must be somewhere.

And so when you read 1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians you actually get to find out what the weapons of your warfare are and they are faith in God. they are prayer in God and they are the actual word of God itself.

They are the weapons of your warfare. They are the very things that can destroy the strongholds over your life and over the lives of other people.

They are the things that can take the lie and then make that lie captive to obey Christ. Verse 5. That's what Paul is saying here.

[25 : 17] You take every lie. You take every argument. You take every lofty opinion. You take those things that are keeping you captive, making you obey the law of sin and keeping you there and you bring them into submission through faith and through prayer and through the word of God believing.

And by doing that what happens next is those things are called to obey Christ. That's how it happens. So strongholds are believing a lie and to break free from the stronghold we need faith in God, prayer to God, and the word of God.

It's that simple. But you have to do it. Hence the instruction that I began the message with. faith. So strongholds.

What is a stronghold in form of a lie? I'll give you some examples. It could be the fact that you believe that God hasn't forgiven you when he has. That's a pretty powerful stronghold over quite a few Christians.

It could be the fact that you are committing a particular sin that you just can't get away from and now you're wondering about your salvation. That's a pretty powerful stronghold.

[26 : 40] Another type of stronghold would be thinking and feeling that God doesn't actually care for you and then that's doubled up when you're afraid that he won't come through for you when you need him most.

And the reason why that's such a powerful stronghold is because you begin to start planning your future rather than just trusting God for it. That's a very powerful stronghold that can influence a great deal over your life.

And all of those are lies. They're all lies because the Bible says the complete opposite about God and his relationship with you and so they're all lies. But unfortunately those lies just keep you where they want you.

As long as the lies remain in your life as whatever lies fill your mind that is where the rest of your life will go. As Romans 12 says that whatever gets your mind gets you.

The transformation of your mind affects your life. So we need to take those lies destroy them with faith and prayer and the word of God and make them obey Christ.

[27 : 53] But how do we make that transition? transition. This is where we'll bring it to a conclusion. How do we make that transition? How do we take those lies and bring them into captivity of Christ?

I'm going to explain. I can't explain every situation because there are just too many. So I'm going to explain one, just one, as we conclude, that I think will cover the most and that is fear.

fear. Now fear turns up in a whole number of ways. We could fear the future, what will happen to my family. We could fear the future for ourselves, what's going to happen to me.

We could fear what's going to happen tomorrow. It doesn't matter the fear, the anxiety, but it begins with a fear. Now the issue is that when a person fears life more than they fear God, they're believing a lie.

Hence what Scripture says, you know, fear him who can cast body and soul into hell. You know, that's real fear.

[28 : 57] Anything less than that is not really something you should be afraid of. It's a lie. It's, you know, to fear something else other than God. To fear man when man is bigger than God and you fear men or women bigger than you fear God, that again is a lie.

You don't need to do that. When you're overly anxious or anxious and you're worried and you're not believing what God has said and therefore if you're not believing what God has said about worry and anxiety, then you're believing a lie and that's why your life is filled with worry and anxiety.

The fear of finding out, of somebody else finding out your sin that you've managed to keep hidden for so long. Again, it's just another lie.

That's not something to fear in the light of God and eternity. So how do we deal with those type of strongholds when fear is such a powerful stronghold and make it obey Christ?

Well, the first thing you need to do is you need to understand how God has created you. Now this is super important. Believe it or not, God has created you to fear.

[30 : 07] God has created you to fear. He hasn't created you with a capacity to fear alone. He hasn't created you with the ability to fear. He's actually created you to fear.

To fear him. So as the proverb says, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Proverbs 1. In Deuteronomy, it says that God has created his people and commands them to fear him.

then in the New Testament, on the other side of the cross, we have Philippians 2, where we are to work out our salvation with what? With fear and trembling.

And so God has created us to fear. But God has created us to fear him. And how does a stronghold take hold of that fear to become a stronghold over our life?

Well, this is how it happens. The world, the flesh, and the devil tell you that the world needs to be feared. That there are things in your mortal body that needs to be feared.

[31 : 20] That the devil himself needs to be feared. And so what the devil does is he takes the fear that should only ever be reserved for God and he redirects it to the world, the flesh, and the devil.

And then you begin to worry. Then you begin to have anxiety attacks. Then you begin to have all this kind of depression. This fear just begins to eat away at your life.

And this fear then becomes an incredible stronghold over your life. In fact, incredibly powerful. The world, the flesh, and the devil tries to redirect the fear that you should have for God to the world, the flesh, and the devil.

So to tell someone not to fear, don't fear the world, don't fear the flesh, don't fear the devil, you know, that's quite true, but it's totally useless to tell someone not to fear is not even biblical.

And why isn't it biblical? Because we have been created to fear. The issue is, what are we fearing? And so the way to destroy those strongholds is one, understand how and why God has created you and for that fear to be redirected away from the world, the flesh, and the devil and back to God who deserves and only deserves to be feared.

[32 : 42] So this is why I said that the weapons of our warfare are knowing the Bible well, praying to God scripturally, and having faith in God and his word.

Then you destroy the strongholds. Then you make those things that have so much influence over you and so much mastery over you, you reverse the tables on it and you reverse the tables on it by understanding scripture and applying it to your own life and by trusting it and having faith and praying to God, you redirect in the case of fear away from the world, the flesh, and the devil and back to God and God alone.

That is how you bring every thought into captivity to obey Christ, the master and Lord of all. That's where our focus should be.

and so for the strongholds over my life and the strongholds over your life, the way to deal with them is to apply prayer, faith, and scripture to them because they're just lying to you, keeping you where you don't need to be and definitely where God doesn't want you to be.

so let's conclude with this one sentence from Romans 7. We are made captive to sin when we lose the battle for the mind.

[34 : 16] We are made captive to sin when we lose the battle for the mind. As believers, we are to be fit and healthy but we are to be mentally fit and healthy.

Amen. Amen.