

Jail Decor

Our Series Scripture...

2 Corinthians 10:3-6 (ESV) 3 For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. 4 For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds.

The weapons are not of the flesh...the war we face is not a physical one Yes we live in our bodies...we experience a great deal in our minds... But the battle we face...the things that imprison us...are lies we still hold on to Paul tells Christ followers...they have been given weapons for a Spiritual problem These weapons have power we have never seen...Power from Heaven... Divine power...Power straight from God... These weapons...are missile locked...targeted...to destroy

When we recognize that our Spiritual weapons are locked and loaded... Armed and buzzing When we realize...our enemy is already defeated... But just waiting to be destroyed When it finally clicks ... That we have been given a weapon greater than the World has ever seen When we stop fighting with our mind...and engage the weapons of our Spirit... We are finally set free from what imprisons us.

We must fight Spiritual things... As Spiritual beings....prayed up in the Spirit... Wielding the Spiritual Sword of God's Word Using Spiritual weapons

2 Corinthians 10:3-6 (ESV) 3 5 We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God,

Did you notice the target?

Arguments...lofty opinions... Raised against the Knowledge of God Arguments that are contrary to God's Truth To His Word Do you see the word "Lofty" These aren't just opinions and arguments...these are arrogant opinions These are opinions that say we know more than God...

These are opinions...just like Adam and Eve...that say...I don't need you God. I know what is best and you don't I don't need your cure..I have my own I refuse to believe that I am imprisoned by my thoughts...God... What imprisons me is..YOU!

Let me unpack this a bit more The War here is to decide the source of truth

James 3:13-17 (ESV) 115 This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. 16 For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. 17 But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere.

Look at what John tells us...

1 John 4:3-6 (ESV) 4 You are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. 5 They are from the world; therefore they speak

from the world, and the world listens to them. 6 We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

Spirit led people...follow and teach Spiritual truths as Paul taught...

1 Corinthians 2:12–14 (ESV) 12 Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. 13 And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.

1 Corinthians 2:12–14 (ESV) 14 The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them

The Battle for Christ followers...is a battle for control Are we going to continue to try to lead our lives...from our minds? Or are we going to allow the Spirit of God...to take rule and guide our minds? We receive all the power of the Spirit at conversion...but we must grow in its use... We must understand...Paul says...what has been given to us. And note again...the natural person...those who have not surrendered to Jesus Don't understand the things of the Spirit of God These God things seem stupid to them...like a bunch of wishful nonsense.

Why? Not because he or she has refused to believe... Not because they don't want to believe.... But because THEY ARE NOT ABLE TO UNDERSTAND THEM! The word for foolishness here is moria It is where we get the word moronic.

In fact a veil was formed to keep us from understanding God and Spiritual thingsUntil God draws them... They remain in a Spiritual fog... no matter how hard you try to convince them....argue with them...try to debate them...try to convert them intellectually.....They are in that fog of arrogance that only God can break through. We will discuss this a bit more later, but often God is trying to draw people to Himself by a revelation of the Holy Spirit...and instead of allowing that to happen, we try to engage spiritual things with our minds. God is drawing them with His Spirit and we are driving them away with our minds. But for now remember...

No human argument can create a relationship with God It must be revealed to them by God

2 Corinthians 10:3-6 (ESV) and take every thought captive to obey Christ, 6 being ready to punish every disobedience

Did you notice that as Spiritual warriors...the captives...take captives? You go from being imprisoned yourself....to taking prisoners. The prisoners you take...are your thoughts... This is so incredible...

You go from being imprisoned by your mind...to imprisoning the lies of your mind And You don't just imprison the thoughts that have tormented you... God lets you blow them up! God gives you a supernatural weapon...full of His power...to obliterate what has been tormenting you

To punish that thought...for being disobedient to God To punish the one who tricked us into believing that lie about ourselves To destroy his lies...with God's howitzer.. To go into battle knowing you have already won and can't be hurt To tell Satan...take this! To finally have your Liam Nelson moment with Satan

Satan..."I know who you are. I know what you want. If you are looking for ransom, I can tell you I don't have it but I am going to be free from you. But what I do have are a very particular set of skills; skills given to me by God; skills God has been giving His Children since literally since the beginning of time. . Skills that make me a nightmare for demons like you. If you let my mind go now, that'll be the end of it. I will not look for you, I will not pursue you. God has already done that. He gets the pleasure of destroying you- I just get to celebrate it.

But if you don't, God will reveal your lies to me, I will finally see your lies for what they are- bars of the prison of my mind, and with God's power in the Spirit I will kill your lies and I will be free from you. I will become the Spirit led person God designed me to be. In Jesus' name I am declaring in the Spirit that I will no longer be a slave to your lies. This Captive is being set free!!

Are you feeling the power yet?

You will receive Power when the Spirit comes upon you. He who is in you...God's Spirit....is greater than.... he who is in the world...Satan God wants us to live in the Victory that He has already achieved.

We know this to be true...then why don't we walk with this kind of confidence?

This series is going to allow us to examine ourselves.

To understand why we do what we do Why the very thing we say we don't want to do...we end up doing Why pastors have moral failures... Why people live secret lives... Why at times we all feel helpless in certain areas of our lives It could be spending money you don't have... having a drink you definitely don't need... telling a story that lacks truth eating to soothe a hurt rather than satisfy a true need We have all been there...Haven't we?

How many of us have felt the same way while trying to follow God? We asked Jesus to come into our hearts... And that moment was incredible... It was as if the world became HD Color The Word of God seemed to jump off the page God's presence seemed to be everywhere we looked Then something happens A divorce challenges our self-worth and undermines our trust

A temptation turns to an addiction to internet pornography A careless word spoken to us...uncovers our suppressed bitterness toward a parent A sudden job loss challenges our faith...and self-worth So as good Christians.... We search the Bible for a quick fix verse to use We prayed hard that we would never do this again We had people pray for us....lay hands on us...intercede for us... We opened our hearts to our accountability partners... And yet...we do "It" again...and again.. Until we lose hope and feel like we have no strength to fight

Our anger rages again....our lust overwhelms us...we eat too much once again Our negative self image amps up...and we are trapped in a maze of Fear..insecurity and despair Our worry and concern about the future and our health...consumes us... And eventually we feel like... A hopelessly inept ineffective Christian. That is when Satan starts to talk... Why can't we be what God's word says we are?

I surrendered to Jesus....I have the Holy Spirit... Why didn't the lustful thoughts go away? Why didn't the desire for narcotics leave? Why do I feel so weak....so helpless... My thoughts become so unspiritual...and seem disloyal to God... But they are there nonetheless Why am I not truly free? Why do I seem to be perpetually broken? Aren't we supposed to be the ones who walk in victory?

The Prophet Isaiah said... Jesus took our weaknesses and carried our burdens... If that is true...why am I so weak?...So Burdened? Why do these things have such a strong hold on me? So.... Why can't we as Christians overcome certain sins and weaknesses? That is what we are going to study in this series More importantly...we are going to learn God's answers

To finally overcome those areas of our lives that imprison us. The Bible calls them Strongholds God never intended for you or I to live a defeated existence.... That loses the battle with sin That can't overcome character flaws... That never rises to anything He has destined for us. I think we all can identify with Paul's struggle...

Romans 7:15 (ESV) 15 For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.

And somehow the Spirit in us...tells us..there is a way out of this doomed cycle. Jesus promised us...

John 8:36 (ESV) 36 So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

There has to be a provision for complete freedom... Surely God didn't want us to live lives that amount to nothing but a series of ups and downs. If Jesus came to conquer sin for us and to set us free...can't I be free of this? In this series... I am going to lead us to a place of brutal honesty To come out from behind our masks...and ask...

Why can't I overcome my trust issues? Why if I am promised perfect peace...do certain fears have a grip on me? Why am I so selfish? So prideful? Why do I struggle so much with anger? Rage? Bitterness? Lack of Discipline? envy? Overeating? If God's Spirit lives in me, why is it so difficult to connect with Him Hear His voice, or walk in true faith? I want us to speak the unspeakable...

That our experience as believers is so often... Inconsistent with what the Scriptures teach and promise

It is time for Christians to get real.... To admit that we don't have it all together... That we have surrendered our hearts to Jesus But we are far from acting or thinking like Him Time to admit what unbelievers already see in us... They see our inconsistencies.... See what we don't admit And wonder...If Jesus hasn't changed us.. What difference would He make for them? When Jesus said...we can be "free indeed" He meant it

He was speaking of true...complete...and lasting freedom The word "indeed" in ontos. It is a strong word meaning "Absolutely" "Really" "Actually" "Completely" It is the same word used...when Luke tells us Jesus has risen...INDEED He has risen...In reality...He Is really risen And in this case...You can be free...Indeed

God's intent is that our lives.... Led by the Spirit express the victorious conquering freedom Jesus promised We don't want to simply confess that we are free...that we are righteous... That we are holy...that we are an overcomer.... We want to actually live out those realities. Turns out we find those answers in God's word

Turn in your Bibles...2 Cor.

Don't avoid the Bible because you don't believe it all. You don't read anything because you believe it all. Don't be one of those people... Who act like an expert on a topic they have never studied.. Read the Bible and then decide for yourself what it does or does not say If you read the Bible and reject it...they at least you are being intellectually honest And can defend your position.

I dare you to begin reading it...it is a very special collection Of ancient manuscripts...written over 1500 years by 40 authors... And it tells one incredible story...without inconsistency or error It predicts the future...and tells us what will happen with Islam...With the Jewish Nation and with us If you want to know what God has planned for us....read this book for yourself

I want us to turn to one of those manuscripts.... Written by a missionary named Paul Paul Journey 1 He traveled all over telling people about Jesus... He planted churches and then wrote letters to them as He continued his journeys Once church was in Corinth...It was the church gone wild. **Paul Journey map 2**

Paul constantly implored them to not follow the lusts of their flesh To not follow the "If it feels good do it" mentality of the Corinthians Instead He urged them to live Spiritually... To let God's Spirit control us rather than our minds, urges and feelings Over the next 8 weeks or so...we will embrace and understand this truth in God's Word

2 Corinthians 10:3–6 (ESV) 3 For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. 4 For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds.

2 Corinthians 10:3–6 (ESV) 5 We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, 6 being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete.

Our problem is that we try to overcome strongholds... With our will..our determination...our power..our minds...our understanding. We are trying to use our weapons in a spiritual war. For though we are in the flesh....we will unpack that in this series We are not waging war in the flesh

The weapons we are supposed to be using.... Have divine power to overcome...what? Strongholds Ok Now we are talking...that is exactly what I need. Divine power....mega ton power...a secret weapon of God To destroy the strongholds in my life Look at the war language here... Weapons...destroy strongholds...taking

captive...punish....complete obedience Can you imagine having a perfect weapon to change your life And then get to the end of your life... And realize that you never used it? Never realized you had it?

2 Timothy 3:5 (ESV) 5 having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people.

Let's not only avoid those people...Let's avoid BEING those people.

3 Key Things to Understand

1. Ourselves

How are we wired? How did God program us? Why does a part of me want desperately to change to be more disciplined...to walk in freedom... Yet another part of me seems to undermine those efforts Why do others seem to overcome...walk in faith...and hear God And it seem I can't How can I fix it? How does it all work? Is this just the way life is going to be?

NO! God had a different plan...a better plan But if we are going to fix what it broken... We have to go back to the designer and find out what is wrong We need to book time at the Genius Bar We are going to discover as we go along in this series that our biggest problem is that we are listening to the wrong genius

Since the moment Adam and Eve rejected God... We have been left on our own...trying to understand ourselves... Disconnected from the creator...the only one who can fix us. Instead of allowing God to define our problem and help us fix it We have developed our own definitions Listened to worldly geniuses.... And have bought the lie that this is just the way life is

2. Our Enemy

We have to understand the Spiritual forces that are against us But it is not enough to just know that Satan is against us. We must be aware of His strategies.... He hasn't changed strategies since Adam and Eve He hasn't had to...lies and deception...that engage our pride Worked then...and work even better now. The degree to which we know his strategies.. Is the degree to which we are prepared to defend against them

2 Corinthians 2:10–11 (ESV) if I have forgiven anything, has been for your sake in the presence of Christ, 11 so that we would not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs.

3. Our God and His Provision

To overcome strongholds we must understand God's provision What is God's truth? Where do we find it? How do we live in it? We have to know more than "Jesus is the answer" We need to know...What is Jesus' answer?

In order to overcome strongholds in our life... We must understand the specific principles That allow the release of His promised provision to us None of us want to settle for A life that is ineffective...hopeless...unsuccessful...fruitless

Yet many of us have bought the lie... That is just the way..things are... Heaven will be better.... so we hobble from one futile struggle into another... We put on our plastic smiles.... Hope we can muster enough strength to try harder... And we settle for SURVIVE when God promises us we can THRIVE

Let me make an announcement.... There is an end to this cycle... God's plan for your life.... A victorious life of freedom, joy, and kingdom focus Is just waiting to be reinstated in your life. You and I are in bondage....and Jesus came to set us free

Charles Hutton

Charles Dutton.... Was an inmate and seemed he would amount to nothing... **Charles Dutton Photo** When he was 17, he got into a fight which resulted in the death of a man Dutton claimed had attacked him. Dutton was charged and convicted of manslaughter, and he spent the next seven years in prison. Several months after being released from prison, Dutton was arrested for possession of a deadly weapon, and was sentenced to three years in prison. Yet he became a successful Broadway star... Winning a Tony Award for best Actor in 1984 Later starring in Rudy and other films.

When asked how he made such a remarkable turn around... He said...."Unlike other prisoners...I never decorated my cell" Dutton knew that this prison was not going to be his home forever. He had a 7 year sentence.

I talk to people all the time about their addictions...their sins and their inability to over come them. Almost all of them have become comfortable in their sins. They believe that this is just the way they are going to have to live their lives. Alcoholic forever....addicted to porn forever...insecure forever...jealous forever. They have made excuses or at least come up with a reason why they are where they are and why they haven't been able to over come it. Their excuses become the banners they wear....They decorate the prison that these sins bind them in.

To many of us have decorated our cell...and settled into an imprisoned existence. How do we decorate the spiritual cell that we are imprisoned in? We hang lies on the walls...Our excuses, our blame of others, or life circumstances...or how the cards were always stacked against us. Many have decorated their cells in self pity and it helps them feel comfortable with "the ways things just are for me" That is a lie straight from Hell. This series is about going to a place of complete and total freedom that is promised to us! But you have to decide to tear down the decorations...and leave the cell

Matthew 28:1–2 (ESV) 1 Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. 2 And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it.

I love that God is in the business.... Of removing anything that imprisons us. He will send earthquakes...angels...His Son...whatever it takes... God gives us a promise....

2 Corinthians 5:17 (ESV) 17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

The old has passed away and the new has come....Really? The one thing that I figured out very quickly... Was that when I was saved....I was definitely not completely new Some things that used to tempt me and bother me....were still there! I still struggled with pride...arrogance...self-sufficiency...anger... If I am new...things certainly didn't seem new I would read Scriptures...like...

2 Corinthians 2:14 (ESV) 14 But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession,

And think...I don't feel triumphant...In fact it seems I have been triumphed over I certainly don't feel at times that my walk with God is a celebration parade

Romans 8:37 (ESV) 37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

Conquerors? Really? in All things? The word here means Abundantly conquering...or Super Conqueror... God says...we don't just win..we always win...and it is always a blow out

Is that how you see the game of this Christian life? Don't you just want to get really honest with God sometimes? God what in the world are you talking about? I am getting beat up by worry...anxiety... Unbelief...discontent....pride...lustful thoughts Not exactly feeling the super conqueror thing....God.

So I turned to other..."More mature" Christians for help They seemed shocked at my concerns not that I had them...but I was voicing them Their answers were interesting... "You will be ok...you just need to mature as a Christian" "You just need your mind renewed" "You just need to be baptized in the Holy Spirit" "you just need more faith" "You need to deny yourself...and crucify your flesh"

Some were just damaging.... "If you really wanted to stop...you could" "Change starts with you" "If you feel this way...you must not really be saved" So I turned to Scripture to find answers... That is what this series is going to be all about.

Here is a summary of the truth in God's word... The promises and assertions of Scripture don't automatically manifest for us when we come to Christ While we are instantly reborn as Spiritual beings... Our Spirit must....over time...reestablish Himself in areas of our lives I have known people who walk with Jesus for decades... And in certain areas of their lives... they are no freer than the day they surrendered to Jesus.

God's love for us and the salvation He offers through Jesus is unconditional. But the fruit of our salvation is not

1 Timothy 6:12 (ESV) 12 Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

Why does Timothy tell us to take hold of something we already have? Take Hold...He says...of eternal life? Well we will discover.... That even though we become spiritually reborn and eternal at salvation.... we can decide if we truly want the Spirit that is in us to rule in every area of our lives. We can engage the Spirit to break down strongholds...or not. Our salvation doesn't ride on it... But our experience through life does

We must learn to take hold by faith... and experience the promises that God says are already ours. Only then can we become who He designed us to be and live in that freedom

Closing

I mentioned last week that we have to get to the point in our lives where we hate these repetitive sins as much as we would hate cancer cells in us. We must identify what remains of our flesh and unleash the power of God to destroy them.

We have to give up our rationalizations....our excuses...the lies that we have believed in order to make us feel better about our shortcomings.

If you are a follower of Jesus, your repetitive sins are attributable to only one thing. It wasn't the family you grew up in, it wasn't the event that changed your life for the worse, it isn't what others have done to you....You and I sin because we choose to. We remain in those sins because we don't trust God's promises. It has nothing to do with anyone else. In the next few weeks we will begin to address how to overcome these sins in our lives....but before we do anything else...we have to own and accept responsibility for what we have done to derail our lives.

Spiritual Healing is an excuse free zone. We must tell God what He already knows...I and I alone have sinned. And I alone choose to keep sinning. And the reason is that I have lacked the faith and trust in you to overcome the sin in my life. I have become comfortable and decorated the cell that is my dysfunction. Truthfully I have wanted my sin more than I have wanted you. They say that everyone in prison claims to be innocent....falsely accused...falsely sentenced. It may be true for some...but it is never true regarding our sins.

Romans 3:10–12 (ESV) 10 “None is righteous, no, not one; 11 no one understands; no one seeks for God. 12 All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.”

The next 8 weeks of this series will do you no good...if you can't at the start...acknowledge that your problem with God and with the sins that remain in your life...are yours. Your old self is your new enemy. What remains must be destroyed.

Galatians 2:20 (ESV) 20 I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

It is no longer I who live...but Christ lives in me...For Him to fully live...we must fully die to our flesh. The more you surrender...the more He lives through you. John the Baptist said....Less of me and more of Him. Let's Pray