

The Christian's Warfare: From Pride to Humility

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The Christian's Warfare

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Amen. Please turn with me in your Bibles to 2 Corinthians 10. Paul's second epistle to the Corinthians, chapter 10. We're going to continue our break from the book of Ezra-Nehemiah for a few more weeks and the subject we're going to be looking at, the title of the message is "The Christian's Warfare." As I've been thinking about and we've been thinking about as elders the spiritual challenges facing us as Christians today, we're just reminded of the urgency of understanding the stakes spiritually, not politically or socially so much, so those things are all important but how much more the stakes spiritually, the souls of men and the kingdom of God and how in confusing times we need to be wise in the way that we go about our living. We live in a war. We've seen that in the last number of weeks. We went from Ezra-Nehemiah and saw the commands or the instructions through the book of Nehemiah to be able to build the city of God, you have to be ready to fight and so we went to Ephesians 6 to see that Paul was essentially saying the same thing. As we build, we must be prepared to fight, and so we looked at the armor of God for seven weeks. And what we want to talk about today really is contemporary Christian warfare. I mean, the title of the message is "The Christian's Warfare," and in a sense what we're going to be talking about in this passage that I think is so relevant to today is that as we look at this passage from Paul, Paul's letter to the Corinthians, we're going to see that spiritual warfare is essentially, Christian warfare is essentially spiritual demolition. Paul is going to use a number of images of warfare in this passage. He's going to pile them upon one another, one commentator talked about, and as we read them, you'll see that, and the idea is that the way that we wage war is in the proclamation of the Gospel, in the proclamation of the truth, and that what causes people to be in bondage are the lies of Satan sown into the hearts of men, that these lies, these imaginations, these beliefs, these intellectual commitments that they have adopted through concepts and thoughts that have been presented to them through the world system, that their own flesh, our own flesh eagerly receives, that these concepts are creating bondage and that the way to deliver people from bondage is with the demolition power of the Gospel, the word of God. And that's what we need in every time, in every era, this is the power of God, the Gospel.

As Paul said in Romans 1:16, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel for it is the power of God unto salvation." The proclamation of the Gospel, the proclamation of the truth of God's word is the power, is the unleashing of the power of God and Paul is describing something very similar here, but he's talking about, he's primarily concerned with

Christians, he's writing to the Corinthians, his second letter. When you really look at what we have in 1 and 2 Corinthians, it appears that Paul wrote at least four letters to the Corinthians. Two of them are canonized, 1 and 2 Corinthians, but apparently there was one written before 1 Corinthians when you read 1 Corinthians 5:9, the first Corinthians that we have, 1 Corinthians, 5:9 he says, "I previously wrote to you." He had written a previous letter. And then in 2 Corinthians you'll see that he talks about another letter that he wrote between 1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians.

So he had written four times to these people. They were dealing with some really challenging circumstances and these circumstances were a great burden to the heart of the apostle and he saw that these Christians were being enslaved and ensnared by wrong thought processes and so this passage he's talking about here, he's basically saying, "What I'm going to be doing is trying to demolish the concepts, the unbiblical beliefs that are holding you captive," and this is essentially what is needed particularly today. As we look at the world around us and we see the pressure of the world, in two major areas that we see it happening in our culture today where we see division being sown, confusion, anger that really grows into rage, we see it in two areas, we see it with the corona virus. I mean, there's a lot of confusion, a lot of rage even. Some of you have experienced that rage, maybe you've been yelled at by someone for not wearing your mask. It goes both ways, though. It goes by people who don't want to wear masks that you're wanting me to wear a mask, and so they're enraged. And it's also not just the corona virus but also our modern experience in recent years and in an increasing way with racial strife here in America. So we see there is such intensity of emotion.

I was reading an author this week who said that what's happening is people are coming more and more isolated to the extremes and there is now, it becomes increasingly impossible to have a rational discussion about these issues, that people tend to shut each other down. You know, and it's like everybody lives in their own echo chamber, they listen to people who confirm what they already believe and they ignore what does not comport and line up with what they already believe on whichever side they're on, and in the echo chamber they become more entrenched. And also the fact that people are, I think this is really profoundly impactful, the fact that we're more isolated than ever because of the corona virus, we're not actually experiencing the kind of fellowship that we normally do, we're not around each other as much, we're not as connected, we're more cautious, we're thinking about other things, we're not dialoguing as much and when you're in your own thoughts in your own mind, then this sense of the echo chamber, the inner echo chamber just continues to grow and you can become more and more entrenched in your position. So this author was saying that if we are more and more entrenched and there's no possibility of dialogue, the only solution to disputes and to resolving disputes is violence. That is the only way to resolve disputes. That is becoming more and more realistic to understand that, isn't it, in America? We see violence but to see that it can continue to grow.

Now thankfully our job is not to fix the world. We can't. Our job is to follow Christ and to be his people and by being his people in community together, loving one another, not letting the conflict out there come in here, that's our job. To keep the conflict and the

anger and the rage that is out there a stranger to the people of God. Jesus said, "They will know you are My disciples by your love for one another." And so how do we not allow the world to make us, to form us into its image? Romans 12:2, "Don't be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." That's the point of this series that I think we'll spend three or four weeks looking at, and our point of departure is this passage, 2 Corinthians 10 and what we're going to see is Paul is basically saying, "Listen, you Corinthians are being ensnared and enslaved by wrong thought processes that you've accepted as true from false teachers that are coming in bringing worldly thinking into the church, and you've become enslaved to that and I am here to preach the Gospel and to demolish those strongholds which are intellectual beliefs and concepts that need to be eradicated from the Christian's thinking and from the Christian's value system." That's really the point we're going to see of this passage.

So let's read together 2 Corinthians 10:1 to 6.

1 Now I, Paul, myself urge you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ-- I who am meek when face to face with you, but bold toward you when absent! 2 I ask that when I am present I need not be bold with the confidence with which I propose to be courageous against some, who regard us as if we walked according to the flesh. 3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, 4 for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. 5 We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, 6 and we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete.

The Christian's warfare. The concepts that enslave people are the lies that are built into the fabric of our society. And Steve Bowman was sharing earlier about Georgia Right to Life, the lies that go into creating a society where abortion can be normal. They are wicked and insidious and they need to be rooted out, especially of the Christian's thinking. We cannot entertain the idea that life doesn't begin at conception. Clearly scripturally it does. Remember we talked a few weeks ago how John the Baptist in the womb recognized Christ in the womb. Persons. John the Baptist called to proclaim the glory of Jesus began his mission in the womb. And so we need to be ready to help one another to not be enslaved and ensnared by any of that kind of wicked thinking and praise God for the ministry of Georgia Right to Life and their efforts to impact even our government through the efforts that they're making. So be in prayer for them. They're going to be sending out an interview that Jess did with Steve this week by video, so be looking for that. I'll be sending the email out tomorrow and you'll want to, you'll get a lot more information about it and then, of course, after the service to spend time with him. But let's pray to the Lord now and ask him to bless us and help us to begin to really see how we need to allow his word to do its work in our hearts.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

Our Father, how grateful we are for Your precious word. We thank You that it is the power of God unto salvation, that it is the word that created the universe out of nothing, and it is the word which goes forth into the darkness of the dead human heart and creates life out of death. And we pray that that word would go forth this morning in our hearts, in our lives. We pray that You would help us to put off unbiblical thinking and that we would commit to pursuing You and bringing every thought captive to the obedience of Christ that He might be our all in all and that He might be magnified in an increasingly holy life that is rooted in holy thinking. We pray this in His name and for His glory. Amen.

So the Christian's warfare and the subtitle this morning is going to be "From Pride to Humility," because what we're going to look at is the spiritual rampart that is pride in the human heart and how it impacts us in all the various things we're talking about, the controversies in the world that come into the church that are continually trying to press us into its mold, that pride is one of the most wicked and insidious things that we must fight against and we must recognize and turn from.

You know, Paul in this passage, you see, he piles up the military metaphors. He says we don't war according to the flesh. That's the first one, verse 3, we do not war, "we do not wage war," some of the translations say, "we don't wage war according to the flesh," though we are in the flesh, we don't wage war according to the flesh but, look, "for the weapons," the implements of war, "the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh." So war, weapons, warfare. But they are divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses, and the word "destruction" is repeated twice there. The destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God. What he's picturing is war, actually, remember we put on our armor in previous weeks and we realized that the armor of God is powered by prayer last Sunday, and that the armor enables us to stand, but what's happening now is we are now advancing on the enemy territory and we're attacking the enemy and to attack the enemy, though we have our armor on, the first thing that needs to happen is an artillery assault. In fact, this is how warfare was waged in ancient Rome. There would be the catapults would be brought out, the battering ram on the gate. There were these massive weapons that were used to try to break, to bring a breach in the wall so that then those wearing their armor could go in and do hand-to-hand combat.

And this is Paul's imagery, that what needs to happen, he's saying, "Listen, guys, you in Corinth, I've been writing you again and again and again more than any of the other churches, you're needing maintenance all the time." They were a high maintenance church. And here in chapter 10 we began to hear his godly consternation over them, that he is deeply concerned for them but he is determined to win the battle, and the problem is this worldly thinking, the weapons that are coming are not some kind of spiritual mystical weapons, the weapons that are used, the weapons in our warfare are the word of God. In fact, I almost titled this message spiritual, true spiritual deliverance, this series of messages, spiritual deliverance. I figured that would probably get a lot of hits from people that are looking for other kinds of spiritual deliverance, and maybe we should still do that. I don't know, but true spiritual deliverance isn't like so often you'll hear about it

in Christian circles, people who talk about binding demons and praying against principalities by name, and all this stuff that they just make up out of their own minds. I mean, they have some Scripture that they touch on and then they run and they just sort of use their imagination to come up with these ideas, but the New Testament doesn't teach those things. The New Testament teaches that the way you deliver people is with the Gospel, with the word of God. That is what is divinely powerful and this is exactly what Paul is saying here. The weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh. We're not doing something, the flesh, we're not trusting in our own human reason, we're not trusting in human wisdom. What we are doing is we're unleashing the power of the word and it is a divinely powerful message.

The imagery I think was really powerful for the Corinthians. When he talks about the destruction of fortresses, he's saying that fortresses in the mind and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God. One commentator points out that he was probably, he probably had in mind having been in Corinth, in his ministry he spent 18 months in Corinth, then he sent his first letter, then he sent 1 Corinthians, then he visited, then he sent a second letter, then he sent 2 Corinthians. So actually four letters. Anyway, I'm not going to take time. I would want to, I'm resisting the temptation to go back over that. We'll talk about that, Lord willing, in future weeks. But the idea is that he knows them very well. He spent 18 months with them in person. He's heard about problems they're struggling with, he's written to them, he heard about those problems in more detail, wrote 1 Corinthians, he heard about ongoing continued problems, he sent the stern letter. He's heard about continuing problems and he sends 2 Corinthians. He's heard about some success and some continuing problems and he realizes that what needs to happen for them, that they are being enslaved and ensnared by thought processes that are damaging the way they see God and the way they see themselves.

And he uses this image of every lofty thing raised up. One of the commentators mentions this was probably in the mind of Paul, he was thinking of something that they would see on a daily basis as they walked about Corinth and that is the Acropolis at Corinth. It was the most, the highest elevated Acropolis in all of mainland Greece. Acropolis is a hill, a fortified hill, and the Acropolis in Corinth had a castle on it. It had a fortress and Corinth was on an isthmus that connected mainland Greece, I mean the main part of mainland Greece, an isthmus that connected it to Achaia which is another part of Greece. So an isthmus, you know, is a little thin stretch of land surrounded by ocean on both sides, and so this thin isthmus that you would go from one side the other, Corinth was on that isthmus and so it was a very strategic fortress built above Corinth, this high and lofty mountain, this mountain fortress, and so Paul pictures that image and he says everything that is exalted like that fortress to control, and what a fortress like that does, you have soldiers that are garrisoned there and they then control the area. So when an army comes in, they're able to leave from the fortress if they need to, go attack, retreat back to the fortress and stop an enemy advance. So the idea is that that fortress can stop the advancing army from making further penetration and Paul says that's what happens in Satan's warfare against us. He brings lies that are actually like that lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God. This fortress is in your thinking, that has been sown there by the world, the flesh and the devil, are controlling you so that the Gospel is not making

its impact. You're a believer but there's areas of your life where you are just in despondency or despair or anger, and it's because you have wrong beliefs that are controlling whole areas of your thinking and your values, your heart.

So he says, "I am," Paul says, "I am going to with God's help demolish those fortresses." This is spiritual warfare because the knowledge of God must have free reign in the heart of every believer. God's Spirit wants his word to root out everything that is raised up against the knowledge of God. He wants every thought to be captive to the obedience of Jesus and the image is basically he's going to use the word and he's going to pound this fortress until the walls are breached and then we're going to go in and we're going to rescue the people that are inside and bring them out, and you and I are the people that are inside that need to be brought out, and the only way we can bring, and the reality is we help one another in the body of Christ to be rescued. It's like you need to be rescued and you need to rescue. This is what Christian living is. You speak the truth to your brother in love and you're delivering them from being enslaved and ensnared in some way and held behind the wall as a prisoner of war in Satan's castle in some way. A part of their life held captive and you speak the truth in love and you smash the wall and God by his power of his word delivers them, and then the next thing you know they're speaking the truth in love to you and doing exactly the same thing, smashing things exalted against the knowledge of God.

I think this is what's happening particularly in the area of what we're seeing today because I know from my interactions with you, I know my own heart. I feel the pressures of what's happening in the world impinging and pressing in upon us and seeking to enslave us and to ensnare us, and so we have to fight against these things. I think they are unbiblical ways of thinking that are hindering you and me. For instance, it's the nature of our sinful human heart, you know, if you've come to faith in Christ, you've been born again, you have a new nature but you still have the old man and you're gonna have the old man until you die or Jesus comes back, and so you're going to have to war against the old man every day. The war is against the world, the devil and the flesh, and because we have the enemy even within us in that sense, we are wrestling and we have something in us that resonates with the lies that are in the world and the lies that are being spun by the enemy of our souls whose goal is always to steal, to kill and to destroy. He's at work and his work is relentless. He is untiring.

And so that is happening every moment of every day and if we are not vigilant, wearing our armor, picking up the sword of the Spirit and now using the word of God which is really like this is an exposition of how the sword goes forward. Paul's saying, "I'm going to bring my sword." Now of course, he's saying the sword is also like artillery. His sword is a cannon. That's the kind of sword I'd like to fight with in a battle. Some guy comes out, it's like, remember, I'm sorry, I'm going here for a second. But the Indiana Jones movie, the first time you saw it and the guys does the sword stuff, he's got that impressive saber. I remember the first time I saw that, spoiler alert if you haven't seen it, I'm sorry, cover your ears, this guy, he pulls out his sword and he's doing all kind of stuff and Indiana Jones is running through, you know, he's been running from people and, you know, "Oh no, he's history." And the guy is like just really impressive. His sword work

and Indiana doesn't have a sword but he pulls out his gun and just shoots him, and it's just hilarious the way that that, you know, they build that up and then, boom, it's over. So I'd like that kind, that's what my sword, I would like that to be. Pull out your sword, okay, here's my cannon, boom, just blow them away.

Well, the reality is if you're in Christ, you have that kind of power. Whatever Satan has, whatever the world has, it can look really impressive, it can be intimidating, but greater is he who is in you than he who is in the world. And yet we don't see how much we need this kind of deliverance, each of us. There are areas of bondage and darkness that we don't know, we don't recognize, and so one of the key things that we have to get rid of is pride, this idea of self-sufficiency, that we think we've got it figured out. It's amazing how much this is just intrinsic to the human soul. To the old man, pride is like the blood almost that flows through every cell in the body.

Spurgeon says it this way, he says pride is so natural to fallen men, pride is so natural to fallen men that it springs up in his heart like weeds in a watered garden. Isn't it amazing how you don't have to work on weeds at all, you just water your garden and you've got weeds coming everywhere, right? He said pride is so natural to fallen men that it springs up in his heart like weeds in a watered garden or rushes by a flowing brook. It is an all-pervading sin and smothers all things like dust on the roads or flour in the mill. Think about a mill where they were, you know, milling flour. You know how you have flour and we don't mill flour anymore but if you're helping cook and you have flour, it's amazing how you can get a cloud going. He's saying it's like that. Pride is like the cloud of flour that would be happening in a flour mill. It's everywhere.

He goes on to say its every touch is evil as the breath of the cholera fiend. Remember they had the cholera outbreak he was dealing with in London, the disease. It's like the blast of the Sahara wind. You may hunt down this fox and think you have destroyed it, but lo, your very exaltation is pride. None have more pride, none have more pride than those who dream that they have none. You may labor against vainglory until you concede that you are humble and the fond conceit of your humility will prove to be pride in full bloom. It imitates humility but it is most truly pride. Pride is a sin with a thousand lives. It seems impossible to kill it. It flourishes on that which should be its poison. It glories in its shame. It is a sin with a thousand shapes and by perpetual change, it escapes capture. It seems impossible to hold it. The vapory demon slips from you only to appear in another form and mock your fruitless pursuit. To die to pride and self, one would need to die himself. Pride was a man's first sin. Pride was man's first sin and it will be his last. In the first sin that man ever committed, there was certainly a large mixture of pride for he imagined that he knew better than his Maker and even dreamed that his Maker feared that man might grow too great. That was essentially, "You will be like God," and man believed he knew better than his Maker who told him, "Do not eat from the tree. In the day you eat of it, you will die." Satan said, "No, God is lying to you. You'll be like God." And man believed that lie. The audacity of pride and you and I come into the world with that wiring.

I was talking to someone recently, he was talking about a little girl, a real strong-willed little girl and they were talking about how they thought they were experts in parenting after their first child, then they had this little girl and they realized that it was just the grace of God apparently on that first one because this was just a total paradigm shift. And he talked about how she would just be so angry and pitch fits and, you know, could never figure out what was even going on. One time the mother in exasperation says, "Why are you so angry?" She was like enraged, yelling. "Why are you so angry?" And this little girl, three years old, three or four years old says, "Because you're not doing it right!" I don't know what they were, what she thought she was not doing right but think about a three or four year old who's telling her mother, "You're not doing it right," and she's telling it with such confidence and such audacious pride. She is standing in judgment over her mother. How insane is that?

And I think about that and I was reminded as I was thinking about that of something that happened to me when I was about five years old. I had just learned to read a little bit. You know how you're learning your letters and so I know the word "river" and we're driving, my family out Interstate 40 to visit our family in Tulsa, OK and so I'm sitting, back then you didn't have to wear, you weren't in a car seat. Remember when we were growing up? You could be lying in the back window and the police officer would just wave at you driving by. "It's no problem. Glad you're comfortable." If you have an accident, you're going just right out the front windshield, right? So anyway, I wasn't in the back window, I was actually sitting up leaning up between the seats so I could see over the front, watching what's happening. It's like a 15 hour drive and so I'm sitting there and we cross the Arkansas River. Okay, cool, the Arkansas River. That's neat. I'm looking at it. A few miles later we crossed the Arkansas River. I mean, I want to tell you, I spent I don't know how long it was but it was quite a while that I spent trying to convince my father that we were going in circles. I mean, I had confidence. "I know this, dad. I just saw. I know." I didn't, you know, "I know you're going in circles."

Now it's so humorous to think about that but at five years old there was something in my heart that believed I could know better than him to that level, and I want to suggest to you that that has not gotten better in my heart, not in my old man. I've just learned to be a little more wise about the way I reveal it. And it's in your heart and you and I are called to die to it daily. We're called to put it to death again and again and again. If it's the first sin that we will commit, and it's the last on our deathbed, we're still to be putting it to death through the Savior who, as we read in the first few verses, the meekness and gentleness of Christ. Paul said, "I implore you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ." We have a Savior who is meek and gentle and you can be like him if you're united to him.

So this is what we're called to do. Pride. And the way that these thought processes keep us in bondage, let me just give you one illustration real quickly that I want to share. When you're trying to help someone who maybe is depressed, and as you're talking to them, as a Christian you're sharing the word with them, what you'll find sometimes is that they have preconceived thought processes and ideas that hinder your ability to make inroads into the issue that they're dealing with. Like for instance, if you're talking to someone who's depressed, they're just really depressed, they may have a real problem

with believing modern self-esteem sort of theology, as it were. Christian evangelical self-esteem theology which is essentially a worldly thing brought into the church that says, "Hey, your big problem is you lack self-esteem." This is the prevailing wisdom of the world. This is why everybody gets a participation trophy now, right? They didn't get those in the old days because everybody didn't think it was the biggest need to have self-esteem. But now they believe. It's like it's axiomatic. This is how the world thinks. This is absolutely true. Unquestionable dogma. In the world, hey, you need better self-esteem.

The Bible thinks that is complete garbage. The complete opposite is true. It's not that you don't love yourself enough, you love yourself too much. "I love myself too much." And even when we act like we don't, when we think we don't have self-esteem, it's really just rage that what we have in some area is not what we think we deserve. "I'm better than this." And so even the greatest act of self-advancement ironically is suicide. It's not that you hate yourself, you love yourself so much that you will not tolerate any more of the pain and you will tell God, "I'm determining." Christians can be deceived into that kind of audacity because even Christians can be blinded to the point of their own pride, and in their misery listening to the things of the world, can be enslaved and captured.

But you're trying to help someone with depression, if they have a self-esteem thing and you're talking about the way out of it, it's like a fortress that is controlling a whole area of their heart and you have to help them see, "Wait a minute, this whole idea, we've gotta blow that up. You've gotta accept the truth and blow that thing to smithereens. It's not about self-esteem."

Another area where you can find it, especially with depression. So someone thinks that they don't have self-esteem and so this is hindering them, "I need to love myself more. I need to be confident in who I am," whatever. No, that's not really the issue. You're thinking about it upside down. Another one is the idea of your identity being rooted in your victim-hood. This is a very common, again, modern dogma that you are a victim, and you're a victim of something and if you're a victim, that defines you. What other people have done to you, that's what defines you. And people have accepted that and then they're enslaved and ensnared because they've accepted that. Listen, the Bible says, "No, what people have done to you does have impact, yes; what people have done to you that is evil God will deal with, yes." "Vengeance is Mine. I will repay," says the Lord. He keeps the tears of his people in a bottle. He cares about your suffering. He cares about the injustice, but he doesn't want any of his people thinking and living as perpetual victims because that is bondage. We are more than conquerors through him who loved us. Read Romans 8:35-39. No matter what happens, we are more than conquerors. We go about in hyper-victory because of Jesus.

But you see, these concepts, these intellectual constructs in the world, they keep us bound up. Now those are just a couple. We could suggest many more but look at how Joseph, Joseph was a victim. He was hated by his brothers. They were contemplating murdering him. They sold him into slavery. He was then falsely accused by his master's wife. Then he was imprisoned unjustly. He spent 20 years, roughly 20 years in this, either this slavery or the dungeon. Actually about 14 or 13-14 years in slavery. It was 20 years total.

Seven years after he gets out and he's leading Egypt, so 20 years between when he's taken into slavery and when he meets his brothers. They don't know it, though. But after he meets them and then skip ahead 20 or 30 more years until his dad dies, remember what he says to them, when Jacob dies, their father, they're scared, they come to Joseph basically pleading for their life, knowing their dad is dead they're thinking he's gonna finally exact his revenge but they find out Joseph does not see himself as a victim. He was at one time, at a moment, a victim. Really there are perpetrators, there are oppressors and there are victims, yes. That is true. God hates oppression, but the fact that you are a victim at a moment in time does not define who you are as a human being and that's what they found out from Joseph. Joseph said, "Guys," he was amazed that they felt the need to come and basically plead for their lives. Basically they're saying, "Don't kill us now that dad is gone." And he says, "What you did, you meant evil. What you did, you did for evil but God meant it for good." To bring about this great deliverance.

You see, Joseph, when he, in fact, it's so beautiful when you read the story of Joseph, Genesis 37-50, when he goes down and he's enslaved, one of the beautiful things, the refrain that keeps happening is it says this, "And the Lord was with him." Joseph's a slave. He thought he was going to be on top but his brothers sell him into slavery to basically say, remember after he has those two dreams, they're like, "We're gonna make sure your dreams don't come true." I mean, this is defiance and wickedness, that pride that was in Adam and Eve when they sinned against God, "We will tell God to just, we're gonna do it our way. We'll show." "What becomes of your dreams now?" And God laughs. "Even in your wickedness you're doing exactly what I want to have happen because I am on the throne." And the Lord's kingdom continues to advance. And when you know that, you can be a victim and even have joy in the moment even as it's happening, almost. That's what happened with Stephen when he's a victim of the murder of being the first martyr. He knows God's on the throne.

But anyway, Joseph, the Lord was with him when he was in slavery to Potiphar. Then when he's falsely accused, he's put in the dungeon, the Lord was with him all along. You see, Joseph is not embittered against God. He's perplexed. He must have had some, there must have been a lot of tears, there must have been a lot of earnest prayer. "Why, O Lord? What is happening. You told me I was going to be in authority over my brothers, I was gonna somehow be a blessing to them, leading them, and here I am far away from them, as far removed as possible. They have no idea that I'm even alive. They don't know that I'm in this dungeon." And yet the Lord was with him and the Lord was working out his perfect plan. Then later he looks back and he says, "Look at this, how marvelous this is. You meant it for evil but God meant it for good, to bring about this incredible deliverance." This salvation of the people of Israel happened through that.

So we have to put off these things if we're going to be free. If we're going to help each other to be free, we have to learn how to think biblically and the first one that we want to look at today, one of these foundational elements that needs to be demolished is the issue of pride. Pride. We want to move from pride to humility and if we can move from pride to humility and we keep working at that in the church, we can pursue unity and we can pursue oneness and we can come to understand one another, listen, we can come to

understand the ways that we have even been victimized, the ways that we've been hurt, the ways that we've been misunderstood. We can love one another and move toward one another. We can speak truth. We can correct one another. We can admonish one another. And we can pursue each other and we will understand more than we've ever understood before, we'll all grow in holiness, we'll see things more biblically, more correctly because we listened and we also spoke. It's not a one way dialog. No dialog in the church is to be one way. We speak the truth in love. We are quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger. We need as people who have our predominant sin of pride, we need to really work hard at listening. But all of us do. All of us need to work hard at listening.

So pride. I want to talk to you about four points this morning to try to blow up this, to do some, to lay some, I have a pastor friend whose son is in demolition with the Marines, so he's learning how to blow things up. He's setting munitions and blowing up a bridge, blowing up the corner of a wall that you want to get through.

So four points. I want you to, we're thinking about pride, we're moving from pride to humility, the spiritual demolition, the Christian's warfare from pride to humility. The first thing I want you to think about in understanding pride and how we put it off is our design, the way God designed us. That's the first point. How God designed us. This is so important. I've said this before but it bears repeating. When God made man in Genesis 1, Genesis 2 that describes the creation of man, both are two windows at the same event. Chapter 2 is kind of like a slow motion instant replay of Day 6 of Genesis 1. Essentially what happened is when God created man, the first thing he did was he spoke to man.

Paul Tripp calls this out in his book, "Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands," and this was so helpful to me. He's basically saying when man was created, before sin entered the world, man needed the word of God. Man could not understand his place in the world, could not understand who he is or what he's called to do without special revelation from God. That is something to really think about. Adam and Eve needed the word of God. They weren't even sinners but they needed the word of God. If they needed the word of God, how much more do we? That's why Jesus said in Matthew 4:4 when he's tempted by Satan, "Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." You and I were made to need the word of God.

So God even before we had pride now, there is no pride in Adam and Eve and yet they need the word of God. That's designed. So we in our unfallen state were made to be dependent. We were not independent agents. We were to be dependent upon the word of God. That should humble us. Now how much more if we're sinners? How incredibly ridiculous and foolish and arrogant is it for us to think we can go a moment without the word of God?

Okay, that's the first point, the design. When we think about God's design, we see that we should be humble. Secondly, when we think about our condition, our condition, our present condition, it should humble us. You turn over a few pages back to Romans 3 where Paul shows us what we are now on this side of the fall. Now that sin has entered the world, what is true of man? What is true of all of us? He says in verse 10, "as it is

written, "There is none righteous, not even one; there is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God." Verse 11, "there is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God." That verse encapsulates two realities of what sin did to us that is true of our condition now. Our fallen condition is our mind is darkened. There is none who understands. And the Bible is replete to illustrate this again and again and again. 1 Corinthians 2:14, "the natural man does not understand the things of God." We cannot understand things correctly. Our mind is darkened, but not only that, he says there's none who seeks for God. That is, not only is the mind darkened, the affections are disordered. The things that we want, the desires that we have, the things that we value are completely messed up. So we now love what we ought to hate, and we hate what we ought to love. We love the exaltation of ourselves in our sinfulness, and we hate to see others exalted. We hate to see God exalted in our sin and the wickedness of our sinful hearts.

Now if that is true, if we now, if we cannot think correctly and we do not want what we should want, how much should we trust our hearts? And yet why is it that you and I are tempted to think we've got it all figured out? Isn't it funny, sometimes I will say that, you know, you'll be having a talk with somebody and you're on the same page and it's like you're talking about what's wrong with the world, and you get through and you're like, "All they gotta do is do that." We just solved all of the problems in the world right now. Have you ever done that? Surely you have. Some of you have done it with me, so I know you have. But it's, there's an element of truth mixed with the audacity of pride and we really need to, yeah, we can confidently speak about what is wrong with the world, yes. We can when we let the Scriptures inform us, we can accurately call out things that need to change, yes. But there needs to be a humility that says even as we're doing it, we know we need grace and we are trembling before the pride that can exalt ourselves in the midst of this.

But when you think about our design, secondly, our condition. Thirdly, our environment. These are things that should work against pride. Our design. Secondly, our condition. And thirdly, our environment. We live in a sinful world. "Do not be conformed to this world." The idea of that verb in Romans 12:2 is something being pressed on from the outside; that you're being shaped and molded. The world has a shaping external pressure upon you continually like clay that is being molded by the hands of the artist, pressing it into its mold. The world is doing that always. Then you add to that the fact that the devil is the one that's in charge of what's happening in the world. He is the god of this age. 2 Corinthians 4:4 says he is the god of this age. Paul says this earlier in this letter and in chapter 13 or chapter 11, verse 3, he says that he talks about the serpent who deceived Eve by his craftiness, by his malevolent brilliance. He says, "I'm afraid that you are being deceived in the same way Eve was being deceived by craftiness." He goes on in that 11th chapter to say Satan disguises himself as angels of light. And so these false apostles are actually satanic emissaries that have come into the church, they're claiming to speak with authority, and they are deceiving you and bringing you into bondage. That's a pretty brilliant strategy on Satan's part. Let people talk about Jesus but not the Jesus of the Bible. Use the name, use some of the lingo, but fill it with different meaning. That's his strategy that started right after the Gospel is given to us and the Holy Spirit descends upon the people at Pentecost. Satan is at work. He's always been at work lying.

Now think about this. If Satan is pulling the levers in the world, if the world system as we see it, Jesus called him the ruler of this world, Ephesians 2 says he's the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience, everyone who is an unbeliever is basically under his slavery and his direction. Now think about if you know that, should you not be a little more skeptical about what you're reading and what you're hearing? Isn't that just like so obvious? Because even whatever might be true in it is probably tainted and laced with poisonous lies.

And you add to the fact, now think about it, what we said so far. God designed us to be dependent. We need his word informing us. We need his word put on first. I love what John Calvin says about this, his image, he said, listen, to understand natural revelation, natural revelation is that there is truth in the world, God is revealing himself in the world, we find out true things in the world through science, through inquiry that's done correctly, done accurately, we can find truth. Natural revelation, we can find truth about the way people relate to one another. We can find truth about history. But Calvin says this in commenting on Psalm 19 which talks about natural revelation and special revelation, he talks about in the first few verses, first six verses about how God speaks through creation and then in verse 7 to the end of the chapter he talks about how God speaks in his word. The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul. Calvin says this, that you cannot as a fallen individual, and I think it was true even before the fall, but how much more so after the fall, you cannot properly interpret natural revelation unless you first put on the spectacles of special revelation. You must put on the word of God and filter everything that you're thinking through the word of God, testing everything to see and hold on to that which is good.

So you put on the word of God, now you can make sense out of things and it's gonna be a community process. In fact, that's the fourth point. It's not only design, condition, environment but resources. If we're going to move from pride to humility, we need to see that we were designed to be dependent. That's the first point. And our condition, our fallen condition, it's utterly madness, it's sheer madness not to be dependent. And when you think about our environment, that Satan is running everything, he's pulling all the levers in the world system, it's insane not to be dependent upon the word of God. But we have the resources necessary. We have in spite of all that's against us. I mean, if we just stopped at point 3, it would be pretty depressing. You and I are mentally, we're a mess. Our flesh is so against us. The world system is against us and we've got no hope. No, we do. We have more than enough. We have all that is necessary for life and godliness. We have a word that is sufficient to equip us for every good work, thoroughly furnish us for everything God calls you to do.

But listen how he does it: the resources are the word of God and the people of God. The word of God and the people of God. This is our only hope to overcome pride and to be what God wants us to be in the world. We must be humble enough to know that God designed us to be dependent. The condition that we're in calls for humility. The environment we're in calls for humility. We're up against an enemy that is too great for us but that humility will be worked out by clinging to the resources God has given us.

4A is the word of God. The word of God. It is the power of God unto salvation. It is that which changes our thinking. It's that which like we talked about earlier, it shows us we're not victims, we can be victors in Christ. It's that which shows us that it's not about our lack of self-esteem, it's about learning to die to self. It's about learning to esteem Jesus. It's about learning to put others' needs above our own. That's the path to victory. You see, the word of God transforms, it demolishes those strongholds and it then changes the way you receive everything else that comes in. But if you have these strongholds there, they're controlling areas of your life where you're not getting it, and because of that you are being enslaved and bound up in various ways. We all are. Unless we're fighting, we're losing and our fighting would be losing if we were not the right man on our side, the man of God's own choosing.

The word of God reveals the Son of God and we bring the word of God to each other, we speak the truth in love, we know that we cling to the word, we try to help one another, "Let's try to think biblically about this. Hey, is my thinking biblical? Show me where I'm wrong." We come humbly like that to each other and the second thing is the people of God. You really can't be blessed with the word of God without the people of God and I want to turn to Colossians 3:16. I mentioned this last week when I was talking about the parallel between being filled with the Spirit in Ephesians 5, and the instruction in Colossians 3, and I want you to look with me at Colossians 3 here, verse 16. "Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God." Now that is the word of God, the word and the revelation of Christ from the word of God, let it richly dwell within you. And remember I mentioned last time, I think, that this as we just naturally read it, I think most Americans read that and we see it atomistically. We just kind of can't help it because the way we've been brought up to think. Some of you that are from other cultures or you were born in another part of the world, you may be able to avoid this pitfall but for Americans, we think about I, me and my.

I remember when I was in seminary learning about this and getting to know my Korean brothers. We had a large number of Korean brothers at Reformed Theological Seminary when I attended. And the thing that I learned was, you know, we would, I had a friend Sung Quan Kim, another guy went by Peter Kim, there were a bunch of guys with the last name Kim. None of them were related. But when I really learned how they say their name, they always say, they actually don't say Sung Quan Kim, they say Kim, Sung Quan if they were in Korea. They're accommodating Americans. They say their last name first because what's most important about them is their family, not who they are individually. This is why Kim Jung Un, Kim Jung Il, that's why that's actually a father and a son. Anyway, no extra charge for that particular piece of information.

Kim is the last name according to America but it's the first name because they think of themselves as a part of groups before they think of themselves individually. Well, there's a sense in which they're getting something that we need to get from the Bible, that is, God does not want us to think atomistically. He's saying let the word of Christ dwell in you,

plural. That within you, in fact, the verb "richly dwell" is in the second person plural, within you, plural, within you as a group, let the word of Christ dwell. Not individually because you're meditating. No, that's important, that's another verse, that's not this verse. This verse is saying let the word of Christ dwell within you by your teaching and admonishing one another. This is how you obey the command, you teach one another, you admonish one another, you listen to the teaching of others, you listen to the admonishment of others, and the word of Christ dwells richly within you, and then you sing and praise God together in thankfulness. This is how the word of Christ really impacts us. We need someone to teach us and someone to admonish us, and God says the word of God is sufficient but it's not sufficient for me just to sit and study my own Bible and as important as that is, I need someone else to teach me the Bible. I need someone else to call me out for my sin.

This is why we need to listen to one another. There are things about the present issues that are going on whether it's the corona virus, it's racial issues that are going on, you and I are inadequate in and of ourselves. We don't see where we're not thinking correctly and we have to love each other enough to be willing to do the messiness of getting together and talking about these things, and if it's the corona virus, to maintain appropriate social distance as we do so. I mean, seriously, there's a lot of questions about it. I don't know. And one of the things we have to understand is what do you really know? What is your opinion? Well, just hold it with appropriate tenacity of the value of the information you have. Act in accordance with it. Wear your mask. Do social distancing. Be kind to other people. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. All of that, but be tolerant for one another and realize, "I ultimately really don't know." We're not gonna know, I don't think we're 30 or 40 years probably what really the story is about the corona virus. Maybe it's quicker. Usually that's about the lag time between something like this, they find out about 20 years later, "Hey, what we were doing, we did this right, we did this wrong. You know, this was really what was happening."

Well, Christians, we should be loving each other. You can feel strongly about the corona virus in some way and I feel differently and we should love one another and pursue one another, and I should listen to you more and you should listen to me more, and listen until you really understand. Proverbs 18:2 says, "A fool does not delight in understanding but only revealing his own mind." A wise man loves rebuke. In fact, it says it's stupid if you don't love rebuke, Proverbs 12, I think verse 1. If you don't like being reproved, if you don't like getting data that doesn't already fit your understanding, you are being, you and I are being stupid. There's something called confirmation bias. This is what the term out there in the world is, and it's accurate, actually. Confirmation bias is that you and I tend to accept data that confirms what we already believe and we discount data that challenges what we already believe, and I would suggest to you that that is pride and if you don't think you're guilty of it, it probably means you are one of the more guilty people. Remember Spurgeon's quote? If you think you have no pride, it just shows that you are really struggling with it.

So we have to humble ourselves and we've got to remember we love each other. We are in Christ. We're heading to heaven. All of these things are just the things he's laid down

for us, just like he lay down for Joseph to walk through them, and whatever evil comes at us, we know God means for good and we're gonna lock hands together and we're going to exalt Jesus Christ together, we're going to speak the truth in love, we're going to hear the truth in love, we're going to be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger, and if we put off pride and we learn how to think biblically, we're going to be able to be delivered from areas. Some of you are in despair, some of you are depressed, some of you are angry because you are letting unbiblical things control areas of your heart.

All of us, I need you to help me. We all need each other and isn't God good to put us in circumstances that are so confusing? I mean, it really, it's one of the most confusing times. I could never imagine it being this confusing, actually, as it is now. I just thought about that just now. I would never have imagined. There's so many things that I'm really confused about. Usually I know, I've got it all figured out, right? Even now I have trouble saying that which means they must be really confusing for my pride not to be able to overcome that. But the reality is we never have it all figured out but Jesus does and he's gonna help us.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

Father, thank You for the preciousness of Your word. We pray that You would help us pursue You. Thank You for Jesus that is a picture of, He is the exalted One and yet He is meek and mild and He gave Himself for us, and He shows us the way that we are to live is through union with Him, trusting in His death and resurrection to save us from our sins, and trusting His death and resurrection to save us in an ongoing way from our pride. I can be humble, we can be humble because Jesus is humble and He will live His life through us. He will help us to be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to anger. Lord Jesus, be glorified in Your people. Make us one for the glory of Your name. Amen.