

2Corinthians – Week 41

I. Review: Chapter 10:1-6

- A. After pleading with the Corinthians to renew their zeal for the collection for the saints in Jerusalem, Paul now turns his attention to his critics and those who have been affected by them...
 - i. Apparently, Titus' report has some bad news in it. He told them of the intruders, speaking trash about Paul.
 - ii. His critics were creating “strongholds” against Paul, trying to malign his reputation and weaken his influence by:
 - 1. Accusing him of being timid when present with them and bold when away from them.
 - 2. Accusing him of walking according to the flesh.
 - 3. By attacking his physical appearance and unskilled speech (cf. vs. 10).
- B. Although the world wages war using worldly tools such as...
 - i. Swords and shields (military).
 - ii. Eloquent speech and worldly wisdom.
 - iii. Charisma (appearance).
 - iv. Manipulation, intimidation, flattery, etc.
- C. Paul recognized that he was in a spiritual warfare and he needed to use divine weapons to destroy satanic “strongholds” that have been erected against the knowledge of God.
 - i. These strongholds or fortresses are the arguments and opinions that these critics have erected against Paul.
 - ii. God's arsenals include the word of God, faith, prayer, agape love, holiness and the gospel message itself.
 - iii. Paul was determined to win back those taken captive by these intruders.
 - iv. Then, after that, punish the critics by having the church expel them.

II. Today's Strongholds and the Arsenal of God:

- A. 1Peter 3:15 (ESV), *“but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect”*
 - i. Secular Stronghold
 - 1. “The Bible is a myth!”
 - a. Myths begin with a make-believe time (once upon a time), a make-believe place (in a far-away place) and make-believe people (Peter Pan).
 - b. The Bible presents itself as history (real events, real places and real people).
 - i. Archeology:
 - 1. The book of John (John 5:2) speaks of a pool with five porches called Bethesda.
 - 2. Archeologists believed that this pool didn't exist until in the 19th century its remains were found.
 - ii. Science:
 - 1. The Bible mentions the earth hanging upon nothing way before this was discovered to be true (Job 26:7).
 - 2. The Bible mentions the earth wasting away long before the law of entropy was discovered (Ps. 102:25).

iii. Non-Christian historians

1. Cornelius Tacitus, a Roman historian who wrote around 112AD, spoke of the execution of Jesus by Pilate.
2. Flavius Josephus, a Roman-Jewish historian who wrote around 93-94AD, spoke of Jesus' death and resurrection in his work called "*Antiquities of the Jews*."
3. H.G. Wells, an atheist, who wrote "Outline of History," calls the gospel accounts of Christ, "history."

iv. Prophecies:

1. The death of Christ was prophesied (Isa. 53) hundreds of years before it took place.
 2. Even his birth place -- Bethlehem -- was spoken way before it happened (Micah 5:2).
2. "The Bible speaks of the earth as having four corners, making it square!"
- a. That's just a metaphor to denote the four directions. Phrases like, "People have come from all corners of the world" denotes people from every nation or direction.
 - i. The Bible actually speaks of the roundness of the earth (Isa. 40:22).

ii. Jewish Strongholds

1. To the Jews, I became a Jew in order to win Jews... (1Cor. 9:20a)
 - a. When speaking to Jewish people, it is good to use familiar terms:
 - i. "Redemption" as opposed to "Salvation."
 - ii. "Redeemer" as opposed to "Savior."
 - iii. "Messiah" as opposed to "Christ"
 - iv. "Torah" as opposed to "Law of Moses"
 - v. "Tanakh" as opposed to "Old Testament"
 - b. Let your references come from what both you and the Jewish people believe: The Tanakh (Old Testament).
 - c. Keep in mind that many Jewish people, like many Catholics, are not familiar with the Scriptures.
2. Stronghold #1:
 - a. Jewish people feel that Christianity is for the Gentiles and to become a Christian means to turn their backs on their Jewishness.
 - i. Christianity does not teach that a Jewish person must renounce their racial descent.
 - ii. The first century Church in a Jewish city (Jerusalem) with Jewish people as members.
 - iii. Being "Jewish" is not a religion; it involves being a descendant of the tribe of Judah.
 - iv. Judaism is the religion of the Tanakh (Old Testament).

3. Stronghold #2:

a. Jewish people don't believe that Jesus is the Messiah.

i. Isaiah 53:5-6 speaks of one who would die for the sins of the people.

1. He was wounded for our transgressions.

2. Our iniquities were laid on him.

ii. Other prophesies include:

1. Isaiah 7:14 – a sign given: a virgin shall bare a son called Immanuel.

2. Micah 5:2 – a ruler of Israel shall come from Bethlehem.

4. Stronghold #4:

a. Jewish people believe that sin is atoned for at Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement).

b. True and the Torah (Law of Moses) called for the high priest (descendant of Levi) to perform an animal sacrifice for atonement (Lev. 16; 23).

i. Is a high priest present? Is an animal sacrifice made?

ii. If not, then how do you atone for your sins?

iii. According to Leviticus 4, forgiveness of sins was granted by way of a sacrifice.

5. Stronghold #3:

a. Jewish people feel that Christianity falsely teaches a plurality of gods.

i. In Mark 12:29, Jesus quoted Deut. 6:4, the oneness of God.

ii. The Torah (Law of Moses) addresses the plurality within the being of the one God in Genesis 1:26. Let US make man in OUR image.

iii. Religious Strongholds

1. Jehovah's Witnesses believe the Spirit of God is a force and not a person

a. Use their own Bible (New World Translation) to expose their doctrinal error.

b. Question: Can a person grieve an inanimate object? Does an inanimate object have a mind?

c. The answer to all these questions is "No."

i. Then why do you believe the Holy Spirit is not a person, since your Bible says do not grieve the Holy Spirit?

1. Eph. 4:30 (NWT) "*Also, do not be grieving God's holy spirit, with which YOU have been sealed for a day of releasing by ransom.*"

2. Evangelicals

- a. Faith-Only groups believe in the sinner's prayer mode of salvation, something not found in Scripture.
- b. Question: How were you saved?
 - i. Acts 2:37-38 (ESV), "*Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Brothers, what shall we do?'*"³⁸ *And Peter said to them, 'Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.'*"
 - ii. Repent, by Greek definition, means to change your mind. It does not mean say the sinner's prayer.
 - iii. If the sinner's prayer were taught, you would see it being practiced throughout the book of Acts.