

Thoughts captive and obedient

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[0 : 00] Let us turn now to the chapter 11, 2 Corinthians 10. The text is in verse 5, but let us read from the beginning again. Chapter 10.

Now I, Paul, myself, beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, who, in present, am based among you, but being absent, am bold toward you.

But I beseech you that I may not be bold when I am present without confidence to which I think to be bold against some should think of us as if we walked according to the flesh.

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not counted, that might be through God to the pulling down of strongholds. In these words, casting down imagination and every high thing that exalted itself against the knowledge of God and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.

Verse 5, 2 Corinthians 10. Casting down imagination and every high thing that exalted itself against the knowledge of God and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.

[1 : 17] Now, at chapter 10, there is a remarkable change in the tone of this letter. In the first nine chapters, the Apostle Paul is addressing the faithful, the godly, the god-fearing, the obedient people in the church of Corinth.

But in chapter 10, this is no longer so. In chapter 10, as it were, the gloves are on. And here in this chapter, Paul declares his apostolic authority, having in mind those who oppose it.

Here he speaks, for example, in verse 6 of revenging all disobedience and punishing every act of disobedience. Here in chapter 10, he speaks about weapons, about warfare, about pulling down and bringing into captivity.

Now, this may seem strange language for a minister of the gospel of peace, for that's what Paul was. But he was forced to take this line, and he makes it clear.

It's not that he wanted to. He didn't enter into the conflict smacking his lips. Nor did he enter eagerly into controversy.

[2 : 43] You'll notice that he prefaces his words here, with his appeal. In verse 1, he says, Now, he was appealing here to those who were challenging his apostolic authority, who were teaching errors, and who were causing trouble in the church at Corinth, because of their proud and pretentious views and attitudes.

They were exhausting themselves. There were those who were exhausting themselves against the knowledge of God, and they had to be brought down. And their exhausted, haughty thoughts had to be brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

That was necessary for the Buddhist church at Corinth. Now then, I want to take these words that refer to the church situation at Corinth, and apply them not to the church situation today, but to apply them to our own personal situation.

A situation that requires that our thoughts be brought into captivity through the obedience of Christ. Now, there are two main things to think of, and the first is this.

You notice the fortress which the gospel subdued. The fortress which the gospel subdued, casting down, subduing, demolishing, imagination, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God.

[4 : 40] Now, what does this mean? I think it means this, that when the gospel is preached to natural man, to man out of Christ, it is met with real opposition.

It faces, as it were, a fortress, a fortress, which has thick, sacramented walls, and whose occupants throw defiance against the knowledge of God through the gospel.

Now, that fortress, with its sacramented walls, is our selves. In our natural state, it is our unregenerate heart.

My dear friends, by nature, our hearts are like a baronial castle, well fortified, excessively manned, and considered well nigh impregnable and invincible.

That's a description of proud man. How proud were the Scottish barons, proud of their castles, of their prestige, of their positions, of their power.

[5 : 48] Their castles were veritable force. And so it is with the heart of man. We have great battlements involved within us.

And they are described here in these words, imaginations and every hiding that exhausts itself against God. And behind these high battlements, man out of Christ has become firmly entrenched. And there is nothing but the gospel of Christ that will move him from that entrenched position. Well then, what are these things with which the soul and the heart of man is buttressed and fortified? It's called here in our version imagination. That word simply means reasoning, deduction, opinion, views, beliefs. And the implication is that such reasonings and opinions are carnal and godless. and the trouble is that the natural man thinks everything of his opinion and his deductions and his views and his beliefs. They are high and lofty and pretentious and they exhaust themselves against the knowledge of God.

[7 : 14] So the apostle Paul is speaking here of man's arrogant thoughts, his arrogant thinking, thoughts which are thrown up like a mighty mound against the true knowledge of God.

Thoughts, thoughts which are against true faith in Christ and which are a hindrance to true faith in Christ. And you see, that's what the gospel is up against when it is preached.

These high and mighty thoughts and that's why warfare is necessary and that's why there needs to be a casting down so that every thought might be brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ for only then will we be lifted up into fellowship with our God and Savior and nothing can cast down such thought but the gospel of Christ.

Well, let me be a little more explicit and notice one or two fortifications within the citadel of our heart. Those imaginations, those reasonings and deductions, those high and exalted thoughts against the knowledge of God, those weapons that are thrown at the gospel of Christ from the proud heart of man.

Notice some of the imaginations and those high things that exhaust themselves against the knowledge of God. That is, for one thing, the wisdom of the world. The wisdom of the world.

[8 : 54] Man by nature is worldly wise. He is worldly wise man, indeed. Now, in Paul's day, the Greeks sought after wisdom and wisdom was their very life and the spirit of the ancient Greeks is still very much alive and indeed so alive that for multitudes of people, the wisdom of this world is the be all and end all of life.

There is nothing more to life than acquiring the wisdom that is of this world. The glory that was Greek was a glory in its wisdom and that is so common today.

This is a great thing, the wisdom of this world. Now, of course, we've got to acknowledge very thankfully and frankly that there is much in this world's wisdom that is not unworthy.

It's not unworthy to improve our minds or to enlarge our horizons. We are buyers, we are like the merchantmen seeking goodly pearls and God has given us natures that are intellectual and cultural and aesthetic.

This is all part of the world's wisdom and we've got to use the nature that God has given us but there is no cross in the world's wisdom. There is no atonement in the world's wisdom.

[10 : 24] There is no knowledge of God in the world's wisdom and without a knowledge of God we are only half taught and therefore anything that opposes the knowledge of God is due for casting down.

Casting down imagination and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God. I wonder my dear friends if every one of us is satisfied I wonder if there are any of us here just satisfied quite totally satisfied with the wisdom of this world.

We want nothing more than this world's wisdom. Now remember this. Paul says the world by its wisdom knew not God. That's still true.

The world by its wisdom knew not God. And that kind of wisdom that stands between us and the knowledge of God needs to be cast down and the Lord says I will destroy the wisdom of the wise. And nothing can cast down like the gospel of Jesus Christ. there is one thing then the wisdom of the world. Another thing also that the gospel has to face as it assaults man's soul is the view that the gospel is foolish and foolishness.

[11 : 52] The wisdom of the world the foolishness of the gospel. You see so wise are so many people in their own eyes that they view the gospel as foolishness.

Their view of the gospel is that this is their view of the gospel and as the gospel speaks to assault the citadel of our hearts it is looked upon by proud man as foolishness.

Now the extraordinary thing is this that those who pronounce the gospel foolish generally know nothing about the gospel have had no real experience of the gospel but that does not prevent them from despising it on the ground of their own superior knowledge and wisdom and also on the ground of prejudice so the world refuses to go to this school because of its foolishness it refuses to enroll in the school of Christ and from the battlements of their own wisdom and darkened understanding they hurl abuse at the truth of God and they seriously underrate the power of the gospel which is the power of God unto salvation and the only thing known to man that can turn man's blindness into light and to give understanding to his foolishness but you see here is a real obstacle that when we face men with the truth of the gospel they consider it foolishness but there's something else to there's the wisdom of the world and the foolishness of the gospel and there's the sufficiency of man from his lofty tower modern man proclaims his self sufficiency who is the lord that I should worship him so you are much good laid up for many years eat and drink and be merry that's the view of lofty man why do so many people reject the

Christian faith today simply because they see no need for it for they believe that they have all it takes within themselves to live life to the fool my dear friends self sufficiency is one of the deadliest sins in the book self sufficiency is one of the greatest bastions there is against the knowledge of God and few things are more exalted against that knowledge of God than the view that we are sufficient of ourselves and nothing therefore is more needful than that self sufficiency be cast down that the high and the mighty be brought low and nothing can do this but the gospel of Christ may the gospel as it is proclaimed today throughout the world put down many of the mighty from their seats may it bring conviction and repentance to the proud in heart may it demolish the battlements of arrogance and bring the soul of arrogant people into submission to the

Lord Jesus Christ it's a cliché but it's true the way up is the way down the way of freedom is the way of submission and the gospel is the power of God unto salvation to bring proud man down and to bring down the mighty from their seats and to cast down imaginations and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God well may the fortress and the citadel of our rebellion and of our rebellious hearts be subdued by this same word of the truth of the gospel and over our hearts may there fly the banner of

[16 : 37] Christ his banner that is land the fortress which the gospel subdues which brings us now to the second part of the text and it is the conquest which the gospel completes the conquest which the gospel completes casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalts itself against knowledge of God and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ when a fortress capitulates and its walls are demolished and its buildings are set on fire that is not the end what about the inhabitants what about the defenders are they allowed to remain in the fortress and rebuild or are they set free in order to build somewhere else of course not they are immediately made prisoners prisoners of war they are brought into captivity to that victorious power and to give obedience to that power now that's precisely as I understand this verse that's precisely what we have here after casting down high opinions and proud reasonings the conquest continues until every thought is made captive to the obedience of Christ now first of all we have the captives identified here the captives are every thought every thought made captive so as to obey Christ and every thought here means everything that passes through the mind that comes from the mind our reasonings our convictions our deductions our conclusions our opinions our beliefs and that really means our real selves for as a person thinks in his heart so is he and if our mind is captive to Christ and to yield obedience to

Christ it means that our whole person is captive to Christ as Matthew Poole puts it the mind and the understanding is the governor and mistress of the soul so the captives are identified our thoughts our very selves led captive to the obedience of Christ to obedience to Christ but I notice this too not only are the captives here identified but the captives are led away they are identified and then they are led away bringing into captivity now that phrase as we have it in our version here bringing into captivity doesn't just mean making captives it means leading captives leading captives as in a triumphal procession we have probably seen on film at least prisoners of war in procession guarded on all sides and taken to some other place the very evidence of victory and of triumph for the

oppressor the evidence of victory now here we see a wonderful sight here we see the thoughts the opinions and the beliefs of rebellious man who has been humbled by the gospel we see his possessions his thoughts and his opinions and beliefs led away in procession to Christ we see his thoughts led away in procession to adorn the triumph of the divine conqueror through the gospel coming to us in power our very thoughts our very desires our longings our longings are towards Christ and we are brought by the gospel to Jesus feet and we see him as our new king and our new master and lord captives are led to Christ and our thoughts and our opinions and our beliefs are so captivated by the gospel that we are brought to the lord Jesus and to surrender ourselves at his feet the captives are led away but more than that the captives are led away to the obedience of Christ to give obedience to their new master the lord Jesus Christ what a transformation we have here through the gospel and its power our thoughts and our minds are no longer proud rebellious self-assured arrogant but submissive and obedient to the lord

Jesus Christ look at it this way our lord Jesus through his word and gospel has enlightened our understanding he's taken away our high and mighty and blind thoughts he has enlightened our understanding so that we now know what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God and the things of the lord are no longer foolishness to us because they are spiritually discerned and we can discern them by the work of his spirit so that we give to this great lord and saviour an enlightened obedience not not a slavish bewildered kind of obedience but an enlightened obedience the obedience of those whose minds have been enlightened and set free from their darkness and pride and again this same lord Jesus through his gospel has freed our wills so that we are no longer obstinate and mulish and rebellious but submitted to his superior will now much is said about the freedom of the will but what is not very often said in many circles is the fact that our will is free only to sin until we're saved and our will never knows freedom until it is made captive to Christ through the gospel and when this happens then our will is our will no longer glories in its supposed freedom it glories rather in its surrender to Christ so that we say not my will but thine be done this means therefore that our obedience is not only an enlightened and intelligent obedience but it is also a willing obedience for he has liberated our wills from their native bonding and so our gracious God goes on dealing with us and he as he instructs our conscience as he directs our emotions as he elevates our desires and as he even revises or reverses our plans in order to bring him into line with his plan so we give to God thankful obedience every thought every desire every wish being brought into captivity to give obedience to Christ now what is that but another way of describing genuine conversion a genuine work of the spirit of God in the soul of man and that's what the apostle is describing here so that we present our bodies our mind our will our all to him for conversion means that we have been made captives of the lord Jesus Christ and the moment we've been made captives of Christ we enter into a new liberty and into new light and into new rejoicing as George Matheson the blind poet put it make me a captive Lord and then I shall be free help me to render up my soul and I shall conqueror be now that's what this verse is about as far as it applies to ourselves we have those rebellious and high and mighty thoughts we think so much of our thoughts and our reasonings and our opinions these must be brought down they must be cast down and instead of them our

thoughts must be must be submissive and brought in under the control of Jesus Christ so that we give obedience in every part of our being to the will and law and mind of Christ so what we want I believe is this that the Lord Jesus would exercise his office of king over the fortress and citadel of our hearts and when he is our king and exercises that office as king he subdues us to himself that's the direction of the subjugation he subdues us to himself that's what we need and that's what we want surely and when he subdues us to himself then every thought is brought into captivity and every desire into captivity to obey him and to glorify him and those who have who know something of this whose imaginations and everything that exalts itself against God have been cast down whose thoughts and desires and aspirations and plans and hopes have been brought into captivity to obey Christ everyone who knows something of this is in a position to say genuinely and humbly and meaningfully my Lord and my God may that be true of every one of us no longer the rebellious spirit but the spirit that says my Lord and my God let us pray our gracious God we come before thee with confession confessing that thy word is so true to life it describes us so accurately and it may be that many of us here this morning can look back to those days when we exalted our reasonings and our deductions and our opinions so that they became a stumbling block and kept us from thyself that they were exalted against the knowledge of God and they kept us from a knowledge of God and we bless thee for the day when the gospel humbled us and brought us low and we pray oh Lord our God

that with thankfulness of heart for the work of the spirit for the work of the gospel within us in days gone by that our whole body soul and mind would be submitted to the obedience of christ and led captive to give obedience to him may this be a means of expressing our thankfulness for the power of the gospel and casting down that which kept us out of thy kingdom and may may our thoughts and desires and every part of us given in willing and enlightened obedience to thee be an evidence of that work and a token of our thankfulness to thee for working mightily in us and we pray oh lord that this would be the experience

[30 : 11] of many in our day for we lord are living in a day when so much is so much emphasis is and weight are placed upon the wisdom of this world the world by wisdom does not know god for there's no cross in the world's wisdom and we ask oh lord our god that that superior wisdom that comes from above that is not earthly or sensual or devilish would take hold of the hearts of those who are still exhausted in their own opinions and who still look upon the gospel as foolishness and bring them down and cause them to fall at thy feet hear us then oh lord as we draw near to thee in worship we give thanks to thee for this opportunity given us and we pray that we would learn from what thou hast said to us during our short time together that thou would bless to our hearts the word of the truth of the gospel that we would ever look upon it as a precious thing never to be despised but forever to be embraced and also to be offered to others who do not know thee and these things we ask in jesus name and for his sake amen the begitu that