“Spiritual Warfare for the lost” by Dutch Sheets

When Eileen from Baton Rouge heard me teach on “Spiritual Warfare for the lost” she knew it was for her. She had been saved for 21 years and had been praying for her Father for 26 years with no results. He had been raised in an occult atmosphere and was a hardened military man who never responded in any way to her many and varied attempts to reach him with the gospel.

She went home from the conference where she had heard me teach, pulled out her notes and began to diligently follow them in praying for her Father. She also called her Mother, gave her a condensed version of my teaching and told her there was a window of opportunity where he would be able to hear and respond. Four days before he died, her Father prayed and accepted the Lord as his saviour.

Eileen went on to say
I couldn’t really celebrate Thanksgiving this year until I called and thanked you for sharing this teaching that showed me how to effectively pray for my Dad with eternal results. I also shared this with our Church, and several people came to me afterwards saying they now have hope to pray again. I wanted you to know that your teaching is having domino effects and impacting the lives of many. Thank you!

Assaulting Strongholds of Mind and Heart

There is an absolute connection between spiritual warfare and intercession, especially in regards to praying for the lost. As we stated in a previous chapter, we have a role in removing the veil that blinds their minds. Part of the veil that blinds unbelievers is the strongholds referred to in 2 Corinthians 10:4 “For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds” KJV. The New American Standard Bible states it this way: “For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.” The word “stronghold” is translated from the Greek word ochuroma, coming from the root word echo, which means “to have or hold”. It is also the word for a fort, a castle or a prison. Strongholds are not demons; they are places from which demons rule.

In essence, satan has a place of strength within unbelievers from which he can imprison or hold on to them strongly. They are prisoners, captives, slaves. Christ was sent “to proclaim release to the captives” (Luke 4:18, emphasis added). We participate in the destruction of these “prisons” through spiritual warfare. What happened for Eileen and her father can happen for you.

I love the concept embodied in the word “destruction”, or as the KJV says, “pulling down.” These words are translated from the Greek word, kathairesis. This important and powerful word has a couple of pertinent meanings. One of them is “to bring down with violence or demolish” something. God’s plan is for us to become demolition agents, violently tearing down satan’s strongholds.

I remember as a small child watching the destruction of an old brick school. I was fascinated as the huge cement ball, attached to a gigantic crane, was swung time after time into the building, crashing through walls and ceilings and bringing incredible destruction. I suppose this would be, in one sense, a viable picture of our warfare as we systematically – one divine blow at a time – work destruction on the strongholds of darkness. It truly does usually happen this way – a systematic, ongoing, one-blow-at-a-time war against satan’s strongholds.

Yet I saw another huge building in Dallas, Texas, demolished several years ago. This edifice was much larger than the school I had seen destroyed as a child. This one covered nearly an entire city
block, or at least it seemed that way to me. The demolition crew didn’t use a wrecking ball for this one. And it didn’t take days – it took seconds. They used dynamite strategically placed by experts to demolish this major structure in less than 10 seconds.

Since the phrase “divinely powerful” is the word dunatos, from which we get the English word “dynamite”, I like to think that this, in some ways, can also be a picture of our intercession. Unlike a detonated physical building, we don’t usually see the answer to our intercession within seconds – we may be strategically placing the dynamite of the Spirit for days, weeks or months. But every time we take up our spiritual weapons and use them against the strongholds of the enemy, we are placing our explosive charges in strategic places. And sooner or later the Hoy Detonator of heaven is going to say “Enough!” There will be a mighty explosion in the spirit, a stronghold will crumble to the ground and people will fall to their knees. Consider this beautiful story:

Ellen was a mother and widow who persistently prayed for her five children after she was left to rear them alone. When gathering them around their father’s casket, she had prayed, “Lord, I don’t have anything to give you except myself and these children, but we commit ourselves to You and trust You to take care of us.”

Hardships hit, but with her faith in God steadfast, she continually declared, “We’re going to make it!” When the state welfare agent wanted to place one boy, Charles, in an orphanage to lighten her load, she refused. “We may not look like much, but we’re going to make it,” she announced stubbornly to the agent who came to the farm to get Charles.

Years passed. The children stayed true to the lord, and most of them entered the ministry – all except one. When the middle boy, Melvin, joined the army, he fell into the ways of the world, married an unbeliever, and forsook the faith of his childhood. Ellen never stopped praying for her wayward son. Every time friends or family members lamented over Melvin’s spiritual condition, she had a standard response “God doesn’t lie – I’ll never stop believing. My boy’s going to make it.”

One day, Charles received word that his unsaved brother Melvin had died suddenly of a heart attack. He immediately flew to Boston and went directly to the funeral home. He immediately flew to Boston and went directly to the funeral home. As he stood before his brother’s casket, wondering how his mother would respond to the shocking news, Melvin’s wife came into the room.

“Charles, I want to tell you something that happened last night that I think will make you feel better,” she said. “I had gone to bed ahead of Melvin. A little later he went from room to room to tell all the children goodnight, then came to our bedroom. But instead of getting into bed, he did something I’ve never seen him do in all the years we’ve been married. He knelt beside the bed and began praying. Then I noticed he was praying in a strange language – a language I’ve never heard him speak before. After a little while he got into bed and went to sleep. Early this morning he had the heart attack and died.”

His fears relieved, Charles phoned his mother’s home and recounted the story. “Well, Mom, what do you think?” he asked. Strong and confident, her voice came back so real he could almost see her Irish eyes sparkling. “I think my boy made it!” Ellen said triumphantly.

The one you are praying for is going to make it as well. God is going to show you just how to pray so that you can demolish every part of satan’s fortress.
"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" (2 Cor. 10:5). Verse 4 says our divinely empowered weapons are for the destruction or demolition of strongholds, and verse 5 elaborates more fully on just what comprises the strongholds we’re going to demolish. In other words, the Holy Spirit breaks down for us exactly what the stronghold or prison is made of. This is critical information as we begin to war for the lost.

**Breaking the Foundations of Resistance**

Specifically, He shares with us three major components of the fortress or prison. These are the things we will begin to call our in prayer and demolish as we war over individuals with our divinely empowered weapons.

The first aspect of the stronghold He mentions is “speculations” – logismos (plural logismoi). This word speaks not of the scattered individual thoughts of humans but of their calculative reasoning, their wisdom or logic. Our word “logic” is actually derived from this Greek root. Logismos is the sum total of the accumulated wisdom and information learned over time. It becomes what one really believes – the person’s mind-set. The Moffatt translation call them “The theories”. Humanity, before the Fall, got their wisdom and logic – their beliefs – from God. Now James 3:15 tells us they come from the earth, the soul or intellect and demons.

The word logismos includes philosophies (conscious or unconscious), religions, humanism, atheism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, racism, intellectualism, Judaism, materialism, roots of rejection, perversions, alcoholism, other addictions – anything that causes a person to think a certain way.

One mom travailed in prayer for some time about her drug-addicted daughter. One evening while lying on her face in prayer, she heard the Lord’s quiet voice promising that (her daughter would) soon be free. Wiping her tears, that mom got up and began praising God. She continued praising God for victory, thought there was no outward change in her daughter. Five long months passed. Then, when the daughter overdosed, she was ready for help. After some Christian counselling, she was set free.

Though there were no doubt other logismoi in this daughter, one was drug addiction, which controlled her thinking.

How does a logismos blind an individual? How do they veil truth? The way the human mind functions dictates that when people hear the gospel, before they even have time to think or reason about what they are hearing, it is filtered through the subconscious or memory where all other information – including these logismoi – is stored. This means that unbelievers don’t hear only what we are saying, they hear what we are saying *plus* what they already believe.

In the past, before realising the distorted perception of the unbeliever, I often wondered why people could hear and reject powerful gospel presentations. Now I understand that what the unbelievers heard was filtered through a belief system – a veil – that caused them to hear something totally different. When “hearing” the gospel message, they didn’t hear what I heard, see what I saw or understand what I understood. The 4th verse of 2 Corinthians 4 clearly states this “that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the *image* of God” (emphasis added). They simply do not see the same image of Christ that we do. To clearly see Him is to love and want Him.
In his novel *My Lovely Enemy*, Canadian Mennonite author Rudy Wiebe aptly pictures how different the same things looks to different people:

> It could be like standing on your head in order to see the world clearer.... If one morning you began walking on your hands, the whole world would be hanging. The trees, these ugly brick and tile buildings wouldn’t be fixed here so sold and reassuring; they’d be pendant. The more safe and reliable they seem now, the more helpless they’d be then.

The same world would look very different, depending on the way it was seen. The same is true with the message of Jesus Christ. People’s *logismoi* distort, colour or turn upside down their perceptions of the gospel message.

For example, I was sharing the gospel with a girl who had been horribly abused. “God is love,” I said. “He loves you so much He sent His Son to die for you.” She heard more than what I said. I know because she said to me, “Oh? If He is love, why would He have allowed me to be so abused? Doesn’t sound like a loving God to me.” That is a *logismos* – a belief, a philosophy, her wisdom, her logic. Someone will need to intercede for her and help tear down the *logismos* with “divinely powerful” weapons. The Holy Spirit will need to remove that veil, allowing her to see clearly.

On another occasion, I was sharing the gospel with a fellow who had a *logismos* I call “good-ol’-boy-ism.” He was just too nice to guy to think he needed saving. “I’m a pretty good guy,” he said. “I don’t cheat on my wife, beat my kids, lie, curse or steal. I don’t think God would send me to hell.” His *logismos*, or belief system, was that a person can be good enough to get to heaven.

How does the gospel break through these arguments? Certainly the gospel of truth itself has power to break down some of this when anointed by the Holy Spirit. But it usually takes a long period of time – if you can get them to listen. It is much wiser to plough the ground ahead of time, preparing for the reception of the seed by pulling down these strongholds, as George Muller and his team did for orphans in their care.

> The spiritual condition of the orphans generally brought great sorrow to our hearts, because there were so few among them who were in earnest about their souls and resting on the atoning death of the Lord Jesus for salvation. Our sorrow led us to lay it on the whole staff of assistants, matrons and teachers to seek earnestly for the Lord’s blessing on the souls of the children. This was done in our united prayer meetings and, I have reason to believe, in secret sessions of prayer as well.

> In 1872, in answer to and as a result of our private and united prayers, there were more believers by far among the orphans than ever. On January 8, 1872, the lord began to work among them, and this work continued more or less afterward.

> At the end of July 1872, the matrons and teachers in the 5 houses, reported to me after careful observation and conversation they had good reason to believe that 729 of the orphan under our care were believers in the Lord Jesus. This number of believing orphans was far greater than we had ever had before, for which we adore and praise the Lord.

Perhaps you already know what these *logismoi* are in the person for whom you are paying. If not, ask the Holy Spirit to reveal them to you. He will. And when He does, call them by name, quoting 2 Corinthians 10:3-5. Say “in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ I am destroying you, stronghold of ...” Do it daily until the person comes to Christ.
During Operation Desert Storm, the Iraqi war machine was overwhelmed by the Coalition Forces’ ability to strike strategic targets with never-seen-before accuracy. Unknown to the Iraqis, the Allied Supreme Command had dropped Special Operations Forces (SOF) deep behind enemy lines. These men provided bombing co-ordinates for military targets and first-hand reports on the effectiveness of subsequent bombing missions.

To avoid unintended targets, pinpoint bombing was often required. A soldier from a SOF unit standing on the ground would request an aircraft high overhead to drop a laser-guided missile. Using a handheld laser, the soldier would point at the target. The missile would hone in on the soldier’s target for the hit.

In much the same way, our prayers focus the attention of God’s powerful weapons on the logismos fortresses of satan in the minds of unbelievers.

The 2nd part of the stronghold we must demolish is “every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God.” I like using the KJV for this verse because it used “high thing” to translate the Greek word hupsoma, which is actually the same root word for “Most High” God. It actually means “any elevated lace or thing”. This is referring to the same root of pride we discovered hidden in the word “blinded” in 2 Corinthians 4:3–4. It is the “most highness” that came to humanity at the Fall when Adam and Eve bought the lie, “You will be like God” (Gen. 3:5).

By disobeying God, humankind, like satan, exalted themselves to a place of equality with the Most High. We became, however, not the Most high but our own most high, filled with pride. One leading lexicon even defined hupsome as “all pride that rises up.” The word would then encompass all mind-sets that exalt themselves against the knowledge of God. It involves a desire to rule our own lives, decide for ourselves right and wrong and basically be our own god.

The good news is that we can also tear down this stronghold in people through spiritual warfare so they can humble themselves and bow their knees to Christ. An example of this power is seen below:

Darlene’s husband died of a heart attack and her older son was killed by a highway sniper – both within one year. Sean, her only remaining child, moved back home to help her with their struggling family business.

Darlene soon realised with dismay that Sean had strayed far from the Lord he had once served. He never read his Bible or went to church, ad he was very cold in his attitude toward her. “Stay out of my room” he barked at her one day when she had gone into his room for something. “I’ll take care of my things in there.”

To keep peace, Darlene tried to leave Sean to himself. But many nights she walked the floor praying for her son, pleading with God to intervene in his life. One day she went into his room to get dirty laundry and found a marijuana plant growing under a special light he’d rigged in the closet.

Standing there, getting more and more angry at the devil, she screamed at the plant. “Die in the name of Jesus! I curse you and forbid you to live in this house. The next day the plant was dead.

That night as she again walked the floor praying for Sean, she felt the Holy Spirit leading her to pray, Lord, I give you my son. Give me back a brother in the Lord.
From then on her prayers changed. She began to praise the Lord that Sean was going to become a brother in the Lord to her. She stopped begging God but continued to thank Him for the work He would do in Sean’s life.

Two weeks later, her son came in early on a Saturday night. He knew Darlene always had a prayer meeting and Bible study going on then. Finding the Bible teacher and his wife still there, Sean began querying them. Before the night was over, Sean asked for God’s forgiveness and promised to follow Jesus for the rest of his life.

“God did give me a brother in the Lord”, Darlene said rejoicing. “Almost 10 years have passed, and Sean is still walking with the Lord.”

The pride in this young man’s life – his desire to rebel against authority and rule his own life – was torn down, demolished through intercession. Read 2 Corinthians 10:5 again, this time from The Living Bible:

These weapons can break down every proud argument against God and every wall that can be built to keep men from finding Him. With these weapons I can capture rebels and bring them back to God, and change them into men whose hearts’ desire is obedience to Christ.

I like the “cans” and “everys” in this verse. The Lord doesn’t wish us luck or tell us that we will win a few once in a while. He lets us know we can break down every proud argument and every wall; we can capture rebels! And we must!

With this in mind, consider the third aspect of strongholds. The Lord tells us we can take “every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.” The word “thought” is noema, which also means plans, schemes, devices or plots. It refers to the spontaneous thought and temptations satan uses to assault the unbelievers, as well as the schemes and plans he used to keep them in darkness. In intercession we must declare boldly that no weapon of satan’s will prosper. We must bind his plans and stand against them through prayer. We can and should pray that the unbeliever be shielded from satan’s thoughts and temptations.

Never stop praying for “hopeless” cases, for no one is beyond the Lord’s ability to convict and convert. Consider the example of E. Howard Cadle. His mother was a Christian, but his father was an alcoholic. Cadle began emulating his father, drinking and out of control, and soon was in the clutches of the crime syndicate.

Every night at 8pm his mother knelt by his bed praying. One evening Cadle pulled a gun on a man and squeezed the trigger, but the weapon never fired and was quickly knocked away. Cadle noticed it was 8pm, and somehow he’d been spared from committing murder.

He continued headlong in vice however and his health deteriorated to where the Doctor told him he had only 6 months to live. Dragging himself home, penniless and pitiful, he collapsed in his mother’s arms saying “Mother I’ve broken your heart. I’d like to be saved, but I’ve sinned too much.”

The elderly woman opened her Bible and read Isaiah 1:18 “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.” That morning 14 March 1914 Cadle started life anew. The change in him was dramatic and permanent.
With Christ now in his heart, he turned his con skills into honest pursuits and started making money, giving 75% of it to the lord’s work. He helped finance crusades in which thousands were converted and became one of America’s earliest and most popular radio evangelists.

He once said “Until He calls me, I shall preach the same gospel that caused my mother to pray for me. And when I have preached my last sermon, I want to sit at His feel and say, “Thank you Jesus for saving me.”

Like Mrs Cadle, we can turn unbelievers “from darkness to light and from the dominion of satan to God.” (Acts 26:18). We are called to enforce and make effectual the freedom Christ procured.

The unbeliever cannot war for himself. He cannot and will not overcome the strongholds of darkness, and he will not understand the gospel until the veil lifts. We must take our divinely dynamic weapons and fight. The powers of darkness will resist, but “do not be afraid of them, remember the Lord who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives and your houses” (Neh. 4:14).

**Questions for Wisdom and Faith**

1. What philosophy (*logismoi*) is the most subtle in affecting nonbelievers today? Can such a philosophy affect a Christian, too?

2. What aspect of pride (*hupsoma*) hindered you from becoming a follower of Christ? Why?

3. What does it mean to capture a thought (*noema*) to the obedience of Christ? Is that self-discipline? What thoughts in your life need to be taken captive?

4. What kinds of spiritual fruit (see Gal. 5) come from our labouring and wrestling for the salvation of others through prayer?