

Soldier Up!

Saints & Spiritual Warfare

"Map Quest"

Second Corinthians 10:3-5

Luke Skywalker thought he was ready to face Darth Vader. Ignoring the warnings of both Obi-Wan Kenobi and Yoda that he was heading into a trap, Luke confronted Vader, only to have his hand cut off and hear the iconic words, "I am your father."

Although the light saber was "an elegant weapon for a more civilized age," Luke's real weapon would be something totally unexpected. In their second confrontation, it wasn't until he abandoned his weapon altogether and was willing to lose his life that he defeated his enemy.

I'm not suggesting that *Star Wars* is in any way a Christian allegory. The scenes I just referenced are a common literary device, found in lots of books and screen plays, to emphasize that we can go off half-cocked, thinking we are proficient with our weapons.

Spiritual warfare can be like that. We can go off half-cocked if we don't understand the weapons of our warfare.

You may have heard Christians talk about spiritual mapping. It started with John Dawson's book, *Taking Our Cities for God*, published in 1989. The book's subtitle is: "How to Break Spiritual Strongholds. "

The author taught that demonic forces block the Gospel. His thesis: the power and influence of the "principalities and powers" over a city must be broken before the Gospel will significantly advance.

Spiritual mapping involves some, or all, of the following techniques:

- The history of the city must be studied and understood. Certain key questions must be answered. For example, How and why did the city begin? Who were the founders and what were their intentions and spiritual condition? What presently characterizes the city, or, what is it known for?
- The latest demographic study of the city should be analyzed.
- The history of race relations must be studied along with any traumatic event the city had experienced like an earthquake, a flood, etc.

With proper research, the demonic spirit or spirits in control of the city will be identified and thus their power can be broken by the use of some appropriate spiritual effort. For instance, if a city is characterized by pride, then the Christian response ought to be humility.

(I thought humility was supposed to characterize us all the time?)

That sounds great - even spiritual. But I'm suggesting it's more like Luke Skywalker getting his hand chopped off.

Let me give you two reasons why spiritual mapping is not part of our spiritual warfare.

The first reason is that it simply is not taught in the Bible.

There is one clear text that describes territorial spirits or demons. It's in the Book of Daniel. We're going to study it in subsequent weeks, so, for now, a brief overview will suffice.

In Daniel ten, the angel Gabriel tells Daniel that he was sent to give him a message, yet it took him twenty-one days to get to Daniel because he was restrained by a demon called the Prince of Persia. He finally broke through with the help of Michael the Archangel.

Daniel wasn't doing any mapping before this demon was revealed to him. After he was made aware of this territorial demon, it had no effect on how he prayed.

No cities were set free; no mass evangelism took place.

I'm not being cynical - just factual.

One scholar summarized this, saying,

That the Bible attests to the existence and activity of territorial spirits does not constitute grounds for thinking that Christians can or should attempt to identify them and the areas they control. The presence and influence of the princes were disclosed to Daniel, but not because he sought to discover their identity or functions. Nor is there any evidence that Daniel prayed for their defeat. Proponents of spiritual mapping run the risk of indulging in the sort of speculation that Scripture consistently avoids.

A second reason we don't want to get caught-up in this kind of thing is because it comes from a misunderstanding of the meaning of the word "strongholds" in Second Corinthians ten.

2Co 10:3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh.

2Co 10:4 For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down **strongholds**,

2Co 10:5 casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,

I like the sound of "pulling down strongholds," don't you?

Trouble is, we tend to think of a stronghold as if it's a rats-nest of demons, led by a more powerful demon; and that we need to make an assault on their territory. That's not it by a long shot.

Paul defines for us what he meant by "strongholds" in verse five. He says they are "arguments," and then qualifies them as "every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God."

William MacDonald said,

Paul saw himself as a soldier warring against the proud reasonings of man, "arguments" which oppose the truth. The true character of these arguments is described in the expression "against the knowledge of God." It could be applied today to the reasonings of scientists, evolutionists, philosophers, and religionists who have no room for God in their scheme of things. The apostle was in no mood to sign a truce with these. Rather he felt committed to bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

MacDonald mentioned evolution. It is an "argument" that seeks to explain origins without any need for God and His creation.

Mormonism, and every other false religion, is an argument against God as He is revealed in the Bible.

These "arguments," lame though they may be, hold nonbelievers captive. They think they are free thinkers, who have thrown-off the bondage of believing in God. The "arguments" are the doctrines of demons, and "every high thing" sounds like a wall behind which they are prisoners held captive.

In some cases, the "arguments" are directly attributed to what we'd call a demon; like the angel Moroni who gave Joseph Smith Mormonism.

The question is, How **do** we cast down those strongholds?

Let me further qualify that question by using the words we find in the Bible text: How do we pull down those strongholds **in a way that "brings every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ?"**

It seems, to me at least, there are three common approaches to the pulling down of strongholds. One I'm going to call 'legislation,' although that might not be the best descriptor. What I mean is that we try to keep laws on the books, or pass new ones, that are in line with the truth taught in the Bible.

Let me say, I see nothing wrong with this; and there is much value in it. For example Prop 8, the 2008 California ballot initiative that established that only marriages between a man and a woman would be recognized in The Golden State. The voter-approved amendment to the state's constitution overturned a California Supreme Court's ruling from the same year that had granted same-sex couples of the state the constitutional right to marry.

Unfortunately, United States District Court Judge Vaughn Walker, who is openly homosexual, overturned Proposition 8 on August 4, 2010.

Many people don't know that the folks who really led the Prop 8 initiative were Calvary Chapel of Chino Hills, pastored by Jack Hibbs, as he was stirred-up by The Lord.

We live in a society governed by laws and should exercise our rights as citizens to see laws passed that reflect God's government.

You've probably heard someone say, "you can't legislate morality." On one level, that's not true. Laws are the very means by which societies do, in fact, legislate what they consider right and wrong.

On a spiritual level, laws cannot change the heart. No legislation can "bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ."

We want to pull down strongholds in a way that affects the heart. Legislation is good, but it stops short of our objective.

A second common approach to the pulling down of strongholds - again, a good one - we can call debate; it's really *apologetics*. It is to meet the arguments of the enemies of the Gospel head-on with the truth of God's Word.

Creation science would be a good example of this. Believers who are scientists who seek to have creation taught side-by-side with evolution; or who debate prominent evolutionists; are to be commended. Creation decimates evolution, and nothing in the Bible contradicts good science.

But, again, please notice: winning a debate does not, by itself, "bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ," because the problem is with the heart.

Apologetics might clear the way, if a person is sincere; but it is not the way of obtaining our objective.

The third approach to the pulling down of strongholds is evangelism. It's the one - **the only one** - that affects the heart and renders it possible for the saved person to "bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ."

Ultimately, then, the weapons of our warfare are the usual, but extraordinary, spiritual disciplines - like prayer and the proper use of the Word of God as a spiritual sword to discern between the soul and the spirit.

We can certainly show how societies who have devalued marriage have crumbled; we can easily prove evolution cannot be true; but it doesn't deliver anyone from behind the barricades.

We must approach this spiritually so that the Holy Spirit can convict the hearts of nonbelievers of sin, of righteousness, and of the judgment to come, and be saved.

Let's legislate! Let's debate! But, foremost, let's pray and share the Word, which is the power of God unto salvation.