

The Power to Convince



(2Corinthians 10:2-8)

God made man with a free will. Because of this, man must be supernaturally convinced in the heart and mind to believe and then act for salvation. Jesus told us the Holy Spirit would do this as the Word is preached.

*John 16:8 AMP - "And when He comes, He will **convict and convince** the world and bring demonstration to it about sin and about righteousness (uprightness of heart and right standing with God) and about judgment:"*

Once the Holy Spirit convinces a person, it is still in the power of the individual to accept or reject, to act or not act upon that information. No one, not even God, can **force** a human being to change their mind or make a decision.

Once a person becomes a believer, the battle for the mind begins and continues throughout their life. The devil does everything within his power to subvert the thinking of people, knowing that humans are free to think and believe whatever they want. However, the devil is limited to ignorance and deception. God, in His mercy and grace, has given us His Spirit so that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God (1 Corinthians 2:12). However, we must also choose to yield to God's influence on our hearts and minds.

The Apostle Paul understood this principle more than any other minister of his day. Paul was the one that told us that we are only transformed by the renewing of the mind (Romans 12:2).

He also told us that we become the servants of whoever we yield to by our choice (Romans 6:16).

The Power to Convince

Paul also spoke of what I call “*the power to convince*.” He knew he needed it and he knew he had it. There were times when he had to defend himself with it. The clearest example is found in 2 Corinthians, Chapter 10.

*2 Corinthians 10:2–8 ESV - “I beg of you that when I am present I may not have to show boldness with such confidence as I count on showing against some who suspect us of walking according to the flesh. For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have **divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete. Look at what is before your eyes. If anyone is confident that he is Christ’s, let him remind himself that just as he is Christ’s, so also are we. For even if I boast a little too much of **our authority, which the Lord gave for building you up and not for destroying you, I will not be ashamed.**”***

The context of this is that Paul’s spiritual authority as an Apostle is being challenged. People were saying he was only in the flesh in his teachings and actions. Paul’s response to these accusations is that he has “*divine power to destroy strongholds.*”

Paul clearly states what the strongholds are. The Amplified Bible states it well.

*2 Corinthians 10:5 - “[Inasmuch as we] refute **arguments and theories and reasonings and every proud and lofty thing that sets itself up against the [true] knowledge of God;**”*

Humans develop strongholds in their thinking. I state it this way: *A stronghold is a belief that is surrounded and guarded by many arguments, theories and reasonings to protect and support that belief.* Strongholds can be developed in many ways, some natural and some supernatural. Every society has a variety of strongholds with many being antagonistic to the Word of God, and some are just cultural differences.

It is true that the devil works to develop strongholds in any society. He influences the thinking of humans in many ways to bring in anti-christ beliefs that can shut entire people groups off from opening up to the Word of God. However, strongholds are not spirits, and they are not demons. Paul clearly said that strongholds are arguments, theories and reasonings of man.

Some suggest that a stronghold can be “cast down” from over a city or an area, and that will change things. The removal of a spirit from an area will not change the way a man thinks. The only way to change the way a man thinks is to get him to see in a different way. He must decide to change his mind having been convinced of something different.

I have been in meetings where the minister attempts to lead people in a challenge against the darkness in an area, and they claim they are casting down strongholds. Without fail, these efforts glorify two things. First, they glorify the devil. Their attention is on the devil and what they perceive he is doing. Everyone gets angry at the devil, and they get excited about challenging him. Second, they glorify the minister that is leading the charge. What he says and does is the focus. I have never seen these efforts change a city or the participants in the meeting.

Paul said he had “*divine power*” to **destroy** strongholds. The Greek word for “destroy” in this verse means: to demolish, extinction. A demon spirit cannot be demolished or rendered extinct. If a demon could be demolished, then we could rid the earth of demons. Certainly that would have been done by now - I have been in many meetings where they were attempting to cast down the strongholds over cities.

We **can** demolish wrong thinking among people. The Bible tells us that a human’s mind can be entirely changed.

*Romans 12:2a AMP - “Do not be conformed to this world (this age), [fashioned after and adapted to its external, superficial customs], but **be transformed (changed) by the [entire] renewal of your mind [by its new ideals and its new attitude],”***

If a mind is entirely renewed, then the old thinking has been demolished, and it is now extinct. The very meaning of “change” is that something is now different and not what it used to be.

Paul says that in the process of destroying the arguments, theories, and reasonings, he was to also “*take every thought captive.*” Again, this is not a demon spirit. A demon spirit may have

planted the wrong thinking, but the problem is now in the thinking of the man. Man's thoughts, or thinking, is what needs to be dealt with.

What is this power that Paul claimed to have? I call it "*the power to convince.*" It's an anointing of God to open the eyes of understanding with the Word of God. It is a Holy Spirit move upon humans to convince them of the Word of God, just as He did when He convinced them of their need for salvation in Jesus.

In context, this power belongs to the ministry gifts. Paul said, "***our authority, which the Lord gave for building you up,***" (Ephesians 4:7-8, 11-15) differentiating the ministry from those being ministered to. We need to be careful to understand that ministry gifts are different from the saints in gifting and anointing.

A believer certainly receives revelation of the Word of God in many ways without the direct ministry of a ministry gift. A believer seeking to grow in God is open to having his mind renewed by the Word of God no matter how it comes to him - in private or in church hearing a sermon. But, Paul's situation in 2 Corinthians 10:2-8 was confrontational. These people were challenging his spiritual authority and the doctrine he had brought. Therefore, these people could not cast down their own strongholds.

An Eye Opening Ministry

If you want to get the darkness out of a room, all you do is turn on the light (if you know where the switch is). You do not go into the dark room, scoop up all the darkness and haul it outside so the light can come inside. No, light makes darkness flee - instantly. John told us this.

John 1:5 - "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."

The "*divine power*" and the "*authority*" that Paul had to minister to the saints was the revealing power of the Holy Spirit in the form of an anointing. It was the power to turn on the light in a dark room. Paul spoke about this power in 1 Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 2:1-5 KJV - "And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my

*preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but **in demonstration of the Spirit and of power**: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but **in the power of God.**"*

Two things are being spoken of here - a demonstration of the Spirit and, **also**, of power. A look at a few translations will explain this better.

*WEY - **convincing power of the Spirit.***

*TAY - God's **power was in my words, proving to those who heard them that the message was from God.***

*AMP - but they were in demonstration of the [Holy] Spirit and power [a proof by the Spirit and power of God, operating on me and **stirring in the minds of my hearers the most holy emotions and thus persuading them**]*

There is a strong pattern here indicating God's power to convince **together** with a demonstration of the Spirit, probably in one of the nine Gifts of the Spirit. People have often said that the manifestation of a miracle, or some other gift, is what is being spoken of for people to place their faith in. Biblically, this cannot be the case. However, the preaching of the Word is promised to be **confirmed** with signs, wonders and miracles.

If we believe something is from God **only** because there is a manifestation of a miracle, then we may find that we believe the wrong thing. There has to be a convincing of the Spirit along with any manifestation. This is part of "the power of God" being spoken of for our faith to stand in. God uses the Holy Spirit to convince a heart (John 16:8 recorded in the second paragraph), and that brings faith. Faith does not come from witnessing a manifestation of some kind. Jesus said:

*Matthew 24:24 - "For there shall arise **false Christs**, and false prophets, and **shall shew great signs and wonders**; insomuch that, if it were possible, **they shall deceive the very elect.**"*

*2 Thessalonians 2:9–10 ESV - "The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with **all power and false signs and wonders**, and with **all wicked deception** for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved."*

GREAT signs and wonders can deceive. As a person who has been in ministry for over thirty years, I have seen many saints led away by manifestations. God never intended for us to believe manifestations alone.

Strongholds Are Not Demon Possession

Strongholds are arguments, theories and reasonings of man. A person may be possessed by a demon spirit, and that spirit can influence the person's thinking. In this case, the person needs deliverance, but that deliverance will not come from casting down a stronghold as described by Paul.

Jesus encountered a man possessed with a legion of demons. Those demons were influencing the man's mind. When Jesus ministered to the man, He cast the demon spirits out of the man. You know, when authority is needed, there is no substitute. But, Jesus did not cast down a stronghold. When a stronghold is cast down, it is demolished and is rendered extinct. The demons in this man went into a herd of swine, and the pigs didn't want the demons either (Mark 5).

When the demons were cast out of the man, he came to his **right** mind.

*Mark 5:15 - "And they came to Jesus and saw the demon-possessed man, the one who had had the legion, sitting there, clothed and **in his right mind**, and they were afraid."*

Prior to this, the man was insane - a mental illness. The phrase "*in his right mind*" means that he was now of sound mind or sane. This is not a stronghold. A stronghold is an argument, theory or reasoning.

The Reason Paul Called it Warfare

People often don't like to change their thinking. I believe one of the things most important in life to unregenerate man and carnal Christians is their opinion. Some will fight with everything they have to preserve their thinking.

The power to convince is also seen in the Old Testament, but only among the prophets.

Jeremiah 1:9–12 ESV - "Then the LORD put out his hand and touched my mouth. And the LORD said to me, 'Behold, I have put my words in your mouth. See, I have set you

*this day over nations and over kingdoms, **to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant**'. And the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 'Jeremiah, what do you see?' And I said, 'I see an almond branch.' Then the LORD said to me, 'You have seen well, for I am watching over my word to perform it.'"*

The process, “*to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant*” is exactly what Paul was speaking about in 2 Corinthians 10:2-8. This is the removal of wrong thinking and replacing it with the right thinking of God’s Word. God even promised Jeremiah that He would watch over His Word to perform it as Jeremiah confronted the people, and he was then confronted by the people. That is an anointing to do the job!

God also promised Jeremiah that He would make him strong enough for the job.

*Jeremiah 1:17–19 ESV - “But you, dress yourself for work; arise, and say to them everything that I command you. Do not be dismayed by them, lest I dismay you before them. And I, behold, I make you this day a fortified city, an iron pillar, and bronze walls, against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, its officials, its priests, and the people of the land. **They will fight against you, but they shall not prevail against you, for I am with you**, declares the LORD, to deliver you.”*

People fight against change, particularly when they are wrong. Unfortunately, they fight most against the **agent** of change. This is why Paul called this process warfare. Please notice! God said He would make Jeremiah strong against **the people** - not against the devil. The devil is not mentioned, and it is God that is talking. If this was some kind of demonic stronghold, then God would have stated it so and *not* said that it was the people. Let’s keep the blame where it belongs.

God Needs a Righteous Preacher

In our current society in America, the power to convince is needed more now than ever before. This generation is fundamentally selfish, entitled, and unwilling to sacrifice much of anything. The ministry needs to boldly challenge those that pacify the masses with whatever the people want to keep the pews filled.

While there are demons at work deceiving and subverting the people in mass, the problem is not the devil or darkness - it's the lack of light. The lack of light is a result of the ministry having

fear of people. While many ministers consider America “the enlightened” church, the evidence is exactly opposite. Eighty percent of Americans claim Christianity. Our current moral situation is proof these people are not disciplined but rather have been entertained.

Many ministers are looking for “*what will work*” to build their church. Jesus told us to “*seek first the Kingdom of God.*” He also told us, “***I will build MY church.***”

When a minister starts to build his church, he steps out of the grace of God and tries to walk in the place of Jesus. Our commandment from Jesus is to make disciples - not to build the church. Grace builds a church. You either have it or you do not, and it is also had in measures. To make a disciple, you must train them in the ways of the Lord. Our focus is to be the hearts and minds of God’s people. We are to tear down every stronghold of opposing argument, theory and reasoning that man can come up with.

The power to convince will enable us to “*take every thought captive to obey Christ.*”