

JOSHUA 6:12-21
DESTROYING FORTRESSES!
PART 2

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to Joshua chapter 6 as we continue our study through the book of Joshua and learn about living that victorious Christian life. (Read Joshua 6:12-21)

This morning we are in part 2 of our study on “**Destroying Fortresses!**” And let me set the stage for what we will be looking at in this study.

The children of Israel are in the Promise Land, the land of Canaan and they are preparing to invade the city of Jericho.

And remember the battle plan that God gave to Joshua and the children of Israel to defeat Jericho. It was not that great of a plan, from a human perspective.

It went like this. The armed guard will lead, marching under their tribal banners. Then they would have the seven priests with seven trumpets. Then the Ark of the Lord will go next. Followed by the rear guard. They were to march around the city once while the priests blew the rams horn, and then they were to return to camp.

Now, think about the children of Israel. The first day that got the instructions from Joshua they may have thought it was a little strange, but they did it.

Then comes day two, and the same instructions. Going around the city, silent, not saying a word, trumpets blowing and now, maybe the people of Jericho, as they looked down upon the children of Israel, were now mocking them, yelling at them, making fun of them. But the children of Israel were not to say a word. And they didn't! They took this seriously!

And then comes day three, same thing.

And then day four, same thing.

Maybe, by now they are wondering what is up with Joshua. Maybe he was out in the sun too long or something. But they go forward.

And then there was day five and day six and then, finally day seven and they are told to march around the city seven times and then the priests were to blow the trumpets and Joshua told the people, “**... ‘Shout, for the LORD has given you the city!’**” Joshua 6:17.

The amazing thing here is that they were obedient to the Lord’s instructions even though it sounded like a foolish thing to do. And God honored their obedience and, as we will see, He will give them the victory!

How could Joshua be so sure that God would give them this victory?

Because Joshua listened and obeyed the Word of God.

Remember what we read in Joshua 1:1-9, “**After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, it came to pass that the Lord spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses’ assistant, saying: ‘Moses My servant is dead. Now therefore, arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them - the children of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you, as I said to Moses. From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the River Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and to the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your territory. No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you. Be strong and of good courage, for to this people you shall divide as an inheritance the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to**

the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”

And our first point in regard to *DESTROYING FORTRESSES* was *OBEDIENCE TO GOD’S INSTRUCTION* and we saw that in Joshua 6:12-17.

Keep in mind that Jericho was a mighty fortress and yet, by faith the children of Israel obeyed the Lord.

And for us, these fortresses may be alcohol, they may be drugs, they may be pornography, maybe it is materialism, or even pride or anger, maybe it is broken marriages, or anything else that is standing before you to take you down and destroy you!

Anything that is standing in your way, like Jericho was for the Children of Israel, your greatest challenge, your greatest obstacle that is trying to stop you from possessing all that God has for you.

And the lessons that God gave to the children of Israel I believe He has for us as well as we deal with the personal enemies that are before us, *THE FLESH, THE WORLD AND THE DEVIL!*

I have broken down the verses here in Joshua chapter 6 like this,

THE ESSENTIALS FOR VICTORY – OBEDIENCE TO GOD’S WORD– JOSHUA 6:12-17

KEEP YOURSELF FROM ACCURSED THINGS – HINDERANCES - JOSHUA 6:18-19

THE VICTORY – A WALK OF FAITH - JOSHUA 6:20-21

This morning, we are going to focus on the second point in regard to ***DESTROYING FORTRESSES*** and that is ***KEEP YOURSELF FROM ACCURSED THINGS – HINDERANCES!***

Let me share this story with you to show you how we can let things get into our lives, distract us, these hinderances, and it can be very destructive. We are told,

Bill, his wife Kathleen, and their daughter Carolyn had been looking forward to spending some time at Big Bear, a family mountain resort. There was not a cloud in the sky when they got into their airplane at the small California airport and started on their way.

Bill was a busy executive as well as a good and careful pilot. He no doubt had many things on his mind as he began to maneuver the airplane toward the resort. He was no doubt talking with his family, thinking about important decisions at work, and flying the airplane, of course. He was busy doing good things, important and appropriate things.

But in his busyness, he neglected an essential thing; he strayed a bit off course. It happened at 12:05 p.m. on a Sunday afternoon on a Labor Day weekend. Their small plane hit a Mexican airliner over a residential area in Cerritos, California, killing everyone on both planes and several people on the ground.

- Heaven Bound Living, Knofel Stanton, Standard, 1989, p. 63

That is a very sad story and yet, every day we see Christians who stray off course just a bit and they crash and burn because they did not keep themselves from the accursed things, they let these hinderances that came into their lives get them off course.

My prayer as we go through this study this morning is that we would learn those lessons that God has for us so we can be victorious in our Christian life and not get off course.

With that as our introduction, let's begin reading in Joshua chapter 6, beginning in verse 18 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word and look at this topic,

KEEP YOURSELF FROM ACCURSED THINGS – HINDERANCES!

JOSHUA 6

VERSES 18-19

There are two points that we see here. First of all, we see the Lord tell Joshua and the children of Israel that they were to **“keep yourselves from the accursed things.”**

And the idea here are those things that were idols and things that were associated with the demonic world. Don't bring them in, **“lest you become accursed when you take of the accursed things, and make the camp of Israel a curse and trouble it.”**

In other words, when you disobey God and you sin, it will not only affect you, but it will affect those around you. And we have seen that played out over and over in the lives of Christians today.

For instance, divorce. It not only affects the people directly involved, but family and friends as well. God has spoken to us what He desires of us and He does that because it is what is best for our lives and we do need to listen. Or, as we saw last time, we need to be ***OBEDIENT TO GOD'S INSTRUCTION!***

We will deal more with these accursed things because it is such a problem today as the flesh, the world and the Devil try to bring us down. And, God has answers on how we can run this race of faith and be victorious.

The second point is that **“all the silver and gold, and vessels of bronze and iron, are consecrated to the LORD; they shall come into the treasury of the LORD.”**

This was not always the case in the battles that the children of Israel fought. They would get the spoils of victory. But here they did not! Why?

Because this first battle was the Lord’s and thus, the firstfruits of this battle belonged to the Lord, all of it.

And, in doing this they would assure themselves future blessings in battles that were coming. This first battle was to be given to God, the spoils of this victory!

So we give our best to the Lord and we do not lose anything as we do. And many just think of the money that they give, but I believe it is much more than that. I believe we give of our time, the gifts that God has given to us and we bless people. That not only honors the Lord, but you are giving back to Him that which He has given to you!

Now, let’s deal with this subject of the **“accursed things.”** Maybe you don’t see this as such a big deal. Maybe you don’t think it really affects others and it doesn’t affect us. We can do as we please and it is all good.

Let me say this, it is not always good. And we don’t have to go very far to see this played out for us.

In chapter 7, after the children of Israel defeat Jericho, they are preparing to go against a little city called Ai.

And listen to what transpired and then I will show you why.

In Joshua 7:2-5 we are told, **“Now Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is beside Beth Aven, on the east side of Bethel, and spoke to them, saying, ‘Go up and spy out the country.’ So the men went up and spied out Ai. And they returned to Joshua and said to him, ‘Do not let all the people go up, but let about two or three thousand men go up and attack Ai. Do not weary all the people there, for the people of Ai are few.’ So about three thousand men went up there from the people, but they fled before the men of Ai. And the men of Ai struck down about thirty-six men, for they chased them from before the gate as far as Shebarim, and struck them down on the descent; therefore the hearts of the people melted and became like water.”**

That is crazy. They were able to defeat the city of Jericho, a fortified city, and this little city named Ai they could not defeat? What is up with that?

Not only that. In the battle against Jericho, not one man was lost. Here, against Ai, they lost thirty-six men! What is happening?

Even Joshua does not get it and he tears his clothes and he blames God for this defeat. Have we ever done that? Maybe not the tearing of our clothes when things go bad, but we blame God for what is happening. I am sure we have!

And listen to what we are told as Joshua is having this little pity-party, blaming God for this defeat. In Joshua 7:10-15 we are told, **“So the Lord said to Joshua: ‘Get up! Why do you lie thus on your face? Israel has sinned, and they have also transgressed My covenant which I commanded them. For they have even taken some of the accursed things, and have both stolen and deceived; and they have also put it among their own stuff. Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before their enemies, because they have become doomed to destruction. Neither will I be with you anymore, unless you destroy the accursed from among you. Get up, sanctify the people, and say, “Sanctify yourselves for tomorrow, because thus says the Lord God of Israel: There is an accursed thing in your midst, O Israel; you cannot stand before your enemies until you take away the accursed thing from among you.” In the morning therefore you shall be brought according to your tribes. And it shall be that the tribe which the Lord takes shall come according to families; and the family which the Lord takes shall come by households; and the household which the Lord takes shall come man by man. Then it shall be that he who is taken with the accursed thing shall be burned with fire, he and all that he has, because he has transgressed the covenant of the Lord, and because he has done a disgraceful thing in Israel.”**”

Do you see how the sin of Achan not only affected his own life but the life of the people around him! We need to take this seriously and not allow those accursed things that were in our life back in. We are a new creation in Christ, and we need to live accordingly!

Listen to what John tells us in I John 2:15-17, **“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world - the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life - is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.”**

First of all, the Greek word for **“world”** is KOSMOS, which can speak of people, the earth in general, nature.

But in this context, it speaks of those things that are in opposition to God.

John has told us that God is light and there is no darkness in Him at all.

That means we are walking in opposition to God, we are not walking in the light but in darkness, we are not walking with God.

James 4:4 tells us, **“Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.”**

We may not like that, but it is clear, you can't serve God and mammon, you must choose. And if you make yourself a friend of this world that is in opposition to God, then you are not a friend of God, but an enemy!

It is hard to swallow something like that but even Jesus said that if we are not for Him, then we are against Him! (Matthew 12:30)

And there has always been this pull that this world has had on Christians. But, as you have noticed, we are seeing a tremendous pull the world has on us now.

And it is easy to be drawn into its destructive ways. The world wants our time, it wants out attention, it wants our resources or our money and as we are drawn down that path our attention towards God, our time we spend with God, the resources that God has given to us is put aside, we just don't have the time, the attention or the resources to do both!

And it is not just that. It is the worldly ideas, the immorality that the world draws us into. And the way that Satan does that hasn't changed since the Garden of Eden. What are those ways? It is very simple and yet we fall prey to them.

First of all, John speaks of the "**lust of the flesh**" and the Greek word John uses for "**lust**" is EPITHUMIA, (ep-ee-thoo-mee'-ah) and it speaks of a craving or a passionate desire.

Now that can be good or bad depending on the context of the sentence.

But when you see it in the context of what John is saying here, it is not good. And the reason I can say that with such certainty is that John attaches this lust to the flesh!

And thus, this is not good, it is used negatively because the Greek word for "**flesh**" is SARX and it speaks of carnality, the depraved nature of man that is governing his life: his reason, his will, his emotions!

Now this is pretty simple but how do we know if something is right or wrong?

And the answer I am sure all of you have come up with. It is the Word of God opened up to us by the Spirit of God!

We all know that but what happens when we are being tempted to do something that is wrong? Who are we going to listen to? And it is easy to say we are going to listen to God, we are going to follow what God has said in His Word, but when these things come our way, we give in many times.

Be careful! You can see the lives of Christians who have been destroyed by giving into the flesh.

Then John speaks of “**the lust of the eyes**” and the idea here is that we are seeking to have all that we see, all that we put before our eyes. The material industry counts on that as they sell you their things. They make them look so good before your eyes that you know that you can’t live without them.

Think about it. Look at the smart phones we have today and how they can get us to buy new ones every few years because they are better, cooler or whatever! The lust of the eyes is what they count on for you to buy their products!

And as Christians, we need to prepare ourselves because the Devil knows that he can lure us into all kinds of things by what we see.

That is why Job said, “**I have made a covenant with my eyes; Why then should I look upon a young woman?**” Job 31:3.

Job had a plan, he was not going to look upon, gaze, stare at young women. He purposed in his heart that he would not look upon a woman lustfully.

In other words, he took a stand with his eyes and refused to look or take a second look!

Also, David said in Psalm 101:3, “**I will set nothing wicked before my eyes; I hate the work of those who fall away; It shall not cling to me.**” Don’t put things in front of your eyes that are going to cause you to lust after them, be wise!

David put Bathsheba before his eyes and looked what happened to him! Be careful, be wise, purpose in your heart that you will not go down that path!

And yet, today, you turn on the television and you see all kinds of immorality that is tempting you and you need to be wise what you are putting before your eyes!

And lastly, there is “**the pride of life.**” And the idea here is that of boasting or bragging to impress someone.

We boast as if we have the power to do these things apart from God enabling us. And what that does is it takes God out of the picture even though the Bible tells us that He is the giver and the sustainer of life. The Bible tells us that it is only because of Him that we live and breathe and move!

You see, there is no room for the pride in our life if we say we love God and are walking in the light as He is in the light!

Make no mistake about it, we need to learn to be wise in what we desire, what we see, what we boast in!

We need to do as Paul admonished us in Romans 12:2, “**And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.**”

Being conformed to this world is easy, just let them press in upon you and you will look just like them. But God’s desire for us is to be transformed by the renewing of our mind, by allowing the Word of God opened up to us by the Spirit of God to work in us to make us more like Him! In other words, “**keep yourself from the accused things.**”

In Hebrews 12:1-2 Paul wrote, “**Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.**”

First of all, when Paul speaks of this “**great . . . cloud of witnesses**” he is not speaking of angels or dead saints. He is speaking of the cloud of witnesses that he spoke of back in Hebrews chapter 11. Men and women of faith who are examples to us on how to live out our faith. To encourage us to keep our eyes on the prize, Jesus! They looked forward to the Messiah’s coming and we look back at His finished work! Learn from them.

And then Paul speaks of getting rid of those things in our lives that weigh us down and keep us from serving. Don’t get entangled in sin which can remove you from ministry. Be wise, pay attention, be alert!

And then Paul speaks of running this race with endurance. Be steadfast, be immovable, stay focused upon Jesus because He is the finish line, He is our goal!

And let’s face it, the Christian life is not a sprint. And I think you know what I mean. In a sprint race you give it everything you got for 100 yards, or 200 yards but then the race is over, and you have nothing left.

I don’t know if you have noticed this, but the Christian life is not like that. It is a long-distance race, a marathon you might say.

And I have seen this many times in the life of Christians. You know what I mean. They start out strong. They are going to Bible studies, they are involved in everything, and then, all of a sudden you don’t see them no more. Or if you see them, it is once awhile for this or for that study.

What happened? They started out strong, but they ran out of gas and they are not finishing strong. They can get back in, but that is a choice on their part!

And it can be hard, there may be pain, there may be difficulty along the way. But just keep your eyes on the finish line, Jesus!

Remember when Paul was going to Jerusalem, and he stopped in Miletus to meet the Ephesian elders. And in Acts 20:22-24 we are told, **“And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.”**

Wherever Paul went he was warned that trouble was waiting for him there in Jerusalem. So why did he go to Jerusalem?

Because he wanted to finish the race strong and he kept his eyes on Jesus. He knew this body of flesh would not last and thus, whatever came his way, he was willing to accept. It was not a fatalistic attitude, but Paul trusted in the Lord and was directed by the Lord.

That is so important for us to understand as we are in this race as Christians. And I can tell you from first-hand experience in running a marathon in Chicago, 26.2 miles, it is not easy. And when I hit around that 20-mile mark, I had enough. I hit the wall you might say!

I was ready to give up. I only had around 6 miles to go. I had run 20 miles already. But my body was telling me to give up, to pack things up, to throw in the towel.

But I didn't do that! Do you know why? Because I kept my eyes on the finish line and I was able to finish the race and I finished strong!

And the reason I am sharing that with you is because that is exactly what Paul is saying here in Hebrews chapter 12. He said, **“... and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”**

He was not just speaking to himself here, but to the Jewish believers who were struggling with their faith. He said, “**let us run**” and that is important. This is not just a select few or this group or that group. It is Christians, we are to run with endurance and keep our eyes on Jesus, He is the finish line!

Remember what Paul said in Philippians 3:12-14, “**Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.**”

Here is the reality, and we need to keep this in mind, or we will be discouraged, we will get depressed!

We have not already attained the life that we want, we are not living all that we want, we have a way to go. Also, we are not already perfected, in a practical sense. In a positional sense, we are perfected because the blood of Christ has cleansed us of all our sins. But we are still living in this body of flesh and we still sin, we still fall far short of what God desires of us.

We have not apprehended these things, yet! And if Paul stopped there, it would be very discouraging to me and I bet to you as well.

But Paul does not stop there. He goes on to say, “**. . . one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.**”

I can't do anything about the past but what I can do is reach forward and press on towards the goal and that goal, as I have said, is Jesus Christ, and so can you!

I am so thankful that God has said I can move on, I can go forward, I don't have to remain in the past, but I can look to the present and on to the future when I am with the Lord!

Now, let me also say this. Don't become complacent and use this as an excuse to sin, that is not at all what the Bible says. Paul even talked about that in Romans 6:1-2, "**What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?**"

I will paraphrase what Paul is saying here, "*Are you kidding me? Just because God has extended to us this gift of grace does not mean we sin to show how much grace God has given to us! Come on! If we died to sin, then we should not be living for sin, plain and simple!*"

But we do know we will sin in these bodies of flesh and the things we want to do we don't do and the things we don't want to do, we do! And it is only Jesus that can help us, but we still struggle in these bodies of flesh.

So this is a battle, as Paul tells us in I Corinthians 9:24-27, "**Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.**"

Paul is telling us that we are in a race, we are in a fight and we have to run in such a way so that we may obtain that prize! We must fight in such a way to get that victory! And I think we can look at some of the things I am going to share with you in such a way that they are hinderances to our spiritual growth.

But, if you look at them in a positive light, you will see that these are things that can help us to grow and to neglect them, to avoid them, if we don't do them, yes, they will be hindrances to our spiritual growth and it will give the enemy a chance to put those accursed things before us so we will be tempted and fall prey to them!

The first thing that is so important to our spiritual growth is the Word of God! We need to be in the Bible, reading it and studying it, being taught the things of God. And let me also say this, because if this is lacking, all the reading and all the teaching and all the studying will be for nothing!

Yes, we are to read, study and be taught the things of God from the Word of God but then we must apply these things to our life. If we don't, then all that information is useless!

And today, we just don't seem to care much about the warnings that are out there. Think about it. When there is a tornado warning, what do many people do? They do nothing! In fact, when one is sited, they get their phones out and start recording the event! They don't run for cover!

And if you think we have become so mind numb, listen to these actual warning labels and to me, if you have to be warned of this, you should not be using the product!

A label on a baby stroller warns: "Remove child before folding." [If this is a problem, maybe you should not have children!]

A brass fishing lure with a three-pronged hook on the end warns: "Harmful if swallowed." [I don't even know what to say with this.]

A popular scooter for children warns: "This product moves when used." [Really?]

A flushable toilet brush warns: "Do not use for personal hygiene." [I am not eating at your house.]

A digital thermometer that can be used to take a person's temperature several different ways warns: "Once used rectally, the thermometer should not be used orally." [Wow! Do we really need to tell people that? Isn't that something you should know?]

A household iron warns users: "Never iron clothes while they are being worn." [It sounds like a Three Stooges routine.]

The label on a bottle of drain cleaner warns: "If you do not understand, or cannot read, all directions, cautions and warnings, do not use this product." [Now if you can't read, is this warning label going to mean anything to you?]

A cardboard car sunshield that keeps sun off the dashboard warns, "Do not drive with sunshield in place." [Maybe you should not be driving? Just saying.]

A 13-inch wheel on a wheelbarrow warns: "Not intended for highway use." [Are there wheelbarrow tires that you can use on the highway?]

- <http://bit.ly/2TWYJL3>

But as we read God's Word, as we allow the Holy Spirit to open our eyes to the things of God, we will grow, and we will know what is accursed and what is not. We will know what to stay away from and what we can partake of!

David said in Psalm 119, "**How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word. With my whole heart I have sought You; Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments! Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You.**" Psalm 119:9-11.

As we read God's Word, as we apply it to our lives, we will know what is right and what is wrong, and then it is up to us, we have a free will, to obey the Lord or disobey the Lord. But there are consequences if we disobey, not because God hates us but because He loves us and wants us on the right path!

And there are those heart issues that are difficult, there are things that can become part of our lives and we feel overwhelmed, we don't know what to do. Get into the Word and be open to what the Spirit is showing you, and then walk accordingly!

Now I can just hear someone say, "*Are you kidding me! It is not that simple, is it?*"

Paul, in Hebrews 4:12-13 put it like this, "**For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.**"

The Word of God is more than just a book. It is God's Word that is opened up to us by God's Spirit and it is powerful enough, it is sharp enough to cut right to the heart of the matter. It works on our conscience or what we desire, and it gets them in line with God!

It deals with our spirit to make it in tune with God!

It deals with our walk, our actions, the things we do and say, and it gets them in line with God.

You see, everything is open to God and God's love for us is so great that He shows us the areas that we need to change, areas we need to grow. Then it is up to us to apply them to our lives and walk accordingly!

So as we look at the Scriptures, as we study the lives of men and women who walked with God, those who struggled in their walk, those who blew it, we can learn from them and grow in our relationship with God as we allow the Word of God to be opened up by the Spirit of God to guide us in our lives.

Remember what Paul wrote in Romans 15:4, “**For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.**”

May we learn from them and be men and women of the Word!

This one I believe goes along with the Bible and our reading and studying and applying it to our lives. And that is prayer!

As we pray, as we seek the Lord, He will give us direction and discernment! It is funny because I have heard people who say that they sought the Lord, and this is what they showed them. And what the Lord supposedly showed them was contrary to the Word of God!

And I am thinking, “*Are you kidding me? That goes contrary to the Word of God! And God will never contradict Himself!*”

Also, prayer is a two-way communication with God. We speak to God, we cry out to Him, and He answers our hearts cry, He shows us what to do, and-so-on.

In Jeremiah 33:3 we are told, “**Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.**”

God wants to speak to us but many times we are so busy that we don’t take the time to listen to what He is showing us. And that can be dangerous. Make no mistake about it, we draw spiritually closer to God as we spend more time with Him!

Let God direct you away from the accursed things and direct you to those things that will bless you, will bless others!

Here is one that I am so thankful that I am seeing more and more of in this church. It is such a blessing to me, and it is a blessing to those who are involved. And that is fellowship with other believers!

I realize that some don't see this as important and thus, when church is over, they are the first ones out the door.

But fellowship is very important. And not just fellowship, but fellowship with other believers!

Being around believers you can be edified or built up, encouraged in the faith. Let's face it, we all go through difficult times and if you want to be by yourself, many times it leads to depression, discouragement. But as you are with others, they can encourage you, pray for you, build you up.

Not only that, and this one we may not like, but it is what is needed many times. And that is correction. Let's face it, we all need to be corrected from time-to-time. None of us are perfect and when you love someone you will correct them in love because you want to see them restored!

Now, one of the reasons we avoid fellowshipping with other Christians is we enjoy what we are doing, and we don't want them to say that it is wrong.

And what many will do is that they will hang around people who will agree with what they are doing so they are comfortable and feel it is okay to do these things. But, as Paul said and made very clear in I Corinthians 15:33, "**Do not be deceived: 'Evil company corrupts good habits.'**"

I think that is very clear. Evil company will pull you down to their level and you will not lift them up to yours! Be careful. And notice what Paul goes on to say in I Corinthians 15:34, **“Awake to righteousness, and do not sin; for some do not have the knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame.”**

Stop listening to those who do not know God, those who are not walking with God and do what is right. Do not sin. Do not go after the accursed things!

Also, Paul said in II Corinthians 6:14-18, **“Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: ‘I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people.’ Therefore ‘Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you.’ ‘I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters’, Says the Lord Almighty.”**

Our fellowship is to be with believers. And I am not saying you can’t hang out with unsaved friends or people. But if you are seeking guidance from them, if you spend more time with them than you do your brothers and sisters in the Lord, something is wrong, and it will be seen in the things you do and say!

The Lord said, **“... ‘Therefore ‘Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, ...’”**

So don’t neglect the fellowship with other believers, because, like iron sharpens iron, we will sharpen each other in the faith!

And here is one that we are seeing more and more of today. And that is listening to bad or false or unhealthy doctrine!

With the Internet today, we have access to so much that is good, and so much that is bad in regard to our Christianity.

And, make no mistake about it, false doctrine **WILL** hinder your spiritual growth, not might!

Think about it. If you fed your physical body with unhealthy food, it will affect you. In fact, it will be seen!

And the same is true with unhealthy or false teaching! As you continue taking in false teaching, unhealthy doctrine, it will corrupt you, spiritual speaking. And what you are taking in will be manifested in your life. **IT WILL BE SEEN!**

Over and over again God warns us about false doctrine and false teaching, that we are to avoid them. And make no mistake about it, if you are taken in by false teaching and teachers, you are being deceived. Now I don't think they believe that, but if you are following a teaching that goes against the Word of God, you are being deceived!

Jesus warned us that in the last days there will be many false prophets that rise up and they will deceive many people, and we are seeing that trend growing today. (Matthew 24:11)

Paul also warned us in I Timothy 4:1-5 as he wrote, **“Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.”**

Isn't that the whole Hebrews Roots movement where you are told to go back to the Law, abstain from certain foods, worship on this day, do this and do that? Of course it is, and that trend is growing in the church today, sad to say, this departure from the faith!

What are we to do? Listen carefully to what Paul told Timothy in I Timothy 4:16, **“Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.”**

The Word of God will expose false doctrine and false teaching and it will keep you from the accursed things that are out there!

And the last one, and this is obvious. But living in sin will keep us from spiritually growing in the Lord. If you are doing things you know are wrong and you feel no conviction of God in your life, something is wrong. You have seared your conscience with a hot iron, and you do not feel that conviction any longer, and that is dangerous!

You need to repent, and then you need to obey the Lord! Sin can hinder our relationship with God!

Now how do we grow in the Lord? How do we stay away from the accursed things that are out there?

We have looked at just a few things, but they are so important to apply them to our lives.

BE IN THE WORD OF GOD AND STUDY THE WORD OF GOD AND APPLY THE WORD OF GOD TO YOUR LIFE!

BE IN PRAYER AND LISTEN TO WHAT GOD IS SHOWING YOU SO THAT YOU CAN WALK ACCORDINGLY!

WE NEED TO FELLOWSHIP WITH OTHER BELIEVERS TO HELP US IN OUR WALK BY ENCOURAGING EACH OTHER AND EVEN CORRECT EACH OTHER!

WE NEED TO AVOID FALSE TEACHERS AND FALSE TEACHING BECAUSE IT WILL HINDER OUR GROWTH IN THE LORD!

And, of course, ***WE MUST NOT LIVE IN SIN. AND IF WE ARE, WE MUST CONFESS OUR SINS AND THEN WALK ACCORDINGLY!***

Listen to what Peter tells us in II Peter 2:20-22, it is a warning. He wrote, **“For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: ‘A dog returns to his own vomit,’ and, ‘a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire.’”**

They had the right information, but they never came to saving faith! They let the accursed things of this world draw them back into the world. So sad. They were so close to saving faith and yet, they never received it! And in the end, they went back to the world!

And Peter goes on to say in II Peter 3:14-18, **“Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless; and consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation - as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures. You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.”**

Peter is warning us, Paul has warned us, Jesus has warned us, the Scriptures warn us to stay away from the accursed things. Don't fall away from the steadfastness you have in the faith and be led away!

And notice what we are to do. **“but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”**

And I will close with this. We have been looking at **“Destroying Fortresses!”** And with that topic we have looked at the *ESSENTIALS FOR VICTORY* and we said that these essentials are *BEING OBEDIENT TO GOD'S INSTRUCTIONS!*

And this morning, we looked at *KEEPING OURSELVES FROM THE ACCURSED THINGS* because they are hinderances to our spiritual growth!

As we conclude this study on **“Destroying Fortresses!”** next week, we will be looking at *THE VICTORY!*