

DEFINING AND DESTROYING STRONGHOLDS

2 Corinthians 3-7

3 For though we walk (live) in the flesh, we are not carrying on our warfare according to the flesh *and* using mere human weapons.

4 For the weapons of our warfare are not physical [weapons of flesh and blood], but they are mighty before God for the overthrow *and* destruction of strongholds,

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; and we lead every thought *and* purpose away captive into the obedience of Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed One),

6 Being in readiness to punish every [insubordinate for his] disobedience, when your own submission *and* obedience [as a church] are fully secured *and* complete.

7 Look at [this obvious fact] which is before your eyes. If anyone is confident that he is Christ's, let him reflect *and* remind himself that even as he is Christ's, so too are we. **2 Corinthians 10:3-7 AMPC**

- Defining strongholds:
 - A stronghold is a house, a structure built of thoughts.
 - The word for stronghold means 'hard' or to make firm (like a fortress is established and entrenched). Self-defensive behavior and self-protective sin are based here.
 - A stronghold is a pattern of thought that gives the appearance of truth but that is rooted in a lie.
 - Strongholds produce double-mindedness and instability in our lives...causing us to attempt to balance competing agendas in our thinking. (See **James 1:5-8**)
 - A stronghold is to your spiritual life what cancer is to your physical health. When thoughts have declared 'independence' from the 'head' and are operating on an agenda that is detrimental to the rest of your being, then you have a stronghold to tear down.
- Professing to live under the Authority of God's Word while actually living by the dictates of human reasoning. When you believe a lie as if it were the truth, your life will be affected as if it were the truth, even though it is a lie.
- A stronghold is any thought pattern on which one relies. This includes arguments and reasonings used to defend a belief, a position, or a behavior. A mindset...your filter for truth...what you really believe. It's the house of thoughts that the enemy works from.

HOW ARE STRONGHOLDS FORMED? (2 Corinthians 10:3-7)

- They come from the accuser, the deceiver, the tempter in many forms.
- **2 Corinthians 10:5** says strongholds come via arguments, theories, reasonings...
- Philosophies, religions, speculations, and imaginations that do not have their origin in the truth.
- The word 'reasonings' implies that the conflict of thought is not with other people, but the conflict within our minds when human reason and divine revelation contradict each other.
- **2 Corinthians 10:5** says that strongholds come via proud, lofty, or 'high' thoughts that oppose the knowledge of God.
- Any thought process that is able to diminish or minimize the truth and replace it with an alternative source of belief. The word here can be translated 'height' which means we have a trust-base or a belief-base that we value 'over' the truth.
- This is a subtle deception that causes people to find it more comfortable to comply with human reasoning that grapples with the truth.

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- Paul refers to strongholds as **pretensions** contrary to the knowledge of God. Paul's word here is **hupsoma**, which literally means 'high thing' and can be translated 'height'. [Vines 1985: 304] It speaks of pride by which we exalt our own human reasonings over divine revelation. It puts the intellect in the place of God so that one is more comfortable trusting his reasonings than believing God's Word. This is mind idolatry.
- Paul calls strongholds **thoughts** that are contrary to the knowledge of God. The word used here is **noema**, which refers to a 'purpose' or 'devise of the mind'. [Vines 1985: 630]. This word is particularly helpful in that it is also used **2 Corinthians 2:11** where it refers to Satan's schemes. Paul writes: "We are not unaware of [Satan's] schemes." The relevant point here is that when human reasonings are allowed to become schemes that set themselves against God's Word, the mind has essentially become captive to Satan's schemes. In such situations, Satan has effectively planted thoughts into our minds and deceived us into thinking that those thoughts were our own reasonings.

How are strongholds formed? They are formed when we:

- Reason through situations in life without looking to God for guidance.
- Draw our own conclusions without consulting God's Word for validation.
- Set our rationalizations above God's revealed will in Scripture.
- Devise schemes for handling life situations contrary to God's directives for living.

It is important to note here that when a person first comes to Christ for salvation, he quite likely has strongholds in his life already. His directions for living have come through parents, teachers, authority figures, his own human reasonings. Any number of things from genetics to environment, to parental discipline, to traumatic experiences in life have played a role in shaping his values and conditioning his responses to real life situations. Now, as a new Christian, it is his responsibility to feed his mind and heart upon God's Word so that he can learn to live by the Holy Spirit's directives rather than by his previous conditioning. This reorientation process involves developing a lifestyle of demolishing strongholds and building godly foundations for living.

KEY: The basis for strongholds is that we **doubt**. We doubt God's Word, so we depend on our own **reasonings**. And, James points out that our tendency to put more faith in our own ability to think through things than in the revelation and direction that God gives through His Word produce prayers that waver and a life that is unstable. Truly, strongholds are a disease that must be excised from our souls if we are to live lives that are fruitful and productive. **M. Copeland**

Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. **Matthew 15:13**

A stronghold is a thought that is thought over and over again until it takes hold deep in your life and penetrates even your unconscious mind and becomes an inner image that controls your life. It can be either positive or negative.

These thoughts are planted like seeds, and the more you think them, the more they grow. This is why we are to meditate on the Word day and night. This will build strongholds of God's thoughts that will cause you success and prosperity in all that you do.

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By the time a thought becomes a stronghold, you are usually not even aware that you are thinking it. But every stronghold can be traced back to a thought or thought habit. One way it can be changed is the same what that it was planted, by what you habitually think. So, if you habitually think the opposite of the stronghold, if you think what the Word says about that area of our life, it will tear down the old stronghold and build a new one. **E. Bamardi**

Christians cannot be owned by a devil. The devil does not own someone who has been bought by a price by Jesus Christ, i.e., redeemed by the Blood of the Lamb. But, Christians can have thoughts in rebellion against God and His Word, thoughts not brought captive to the obedience of Jesus Christ. These thoughts are lies we have swallowed, lying words we have believed, words which we have obeyed in disobedience to God. They are things like vain imaginations, sinful habits. They are fortresses keeping God out. They are fortresses protecting Satan and our sinful ways. They are fortresses protecting our very 'selves'. They are our defenses from anything entering from the outside that would threaten us and cause us to be overthrown. **(2 Corinthians 10:3-5) M. Craig**

Strongholds are rooted in our past experiences. Our minds are warehouses for past experiences and the thoughts we have are responses we have given to those experiences.

They come from and are rooted to the environment around us.

They come from a system of error within us. Whether a stronghold comes from a past or present environment, it depends on a system of wrong thinking which lends credibility to its existence.

A stronghold may be of such a duration that you confuse it with your personality...we may have thought abnormally for so long that it seems that abnormal is normal.

There is NO shame to having a stronghold; only in keeping it!

Examples: obsessions, fears, addictions, anxieties, undiagnosable illnesses, sleep related problems, fixations, prejudices, guilt, shame, resentment, self-righteousness, lust, jealousy, etc.

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 Corinthians 10:5 NASB**

- When our thought patterns and reasonings get infiltrated by the spirit of this age then our mind becomes a place where the enemy's schemes appear to us as our own reasonings. Strongholds are often the product of such deception.
- A stronghold can become an arsenal or 'weapon' depot of destructive thoughts in our lives.
- We develop a system of reason that that gets used to perpetrate the enemy's purpose upon us and frustrates God's plans for our lives.
- The stronghold becomes a 'command post' from which the enemy works to influence our beliefs and life choices.
- This may cause us to speak the 'proof' of our thinking instead of the 'truth' of His Word.
- Every thought.
 - Spontaneous thoughts
 - Temptations
 - Schemes of the enemy

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Reread **2 Corinthians 10:3-7 AMPC**

HOW DO WE TEAR DOWN STRONGHOLDS IN US AND IN OTHERS? (2 Corinthians 10:3-4)

- **Divinely Empowered WEAPONS (v4) Wuest Translation** (See below)
 - ..."resulting in the demolition of (strongholds) fortresses, demolishing, reasonings and every haughty mental elevation which lifts itself up against the Experiential Knowledge (we believers have) of God leading captive every thought into the obedience to Christ and being in readiness to discipline every careless, apathetic hearing of and disobedience to the Word"...
 - V5..."every haughty mental elevation...every elevation barrier raised up for defense against an attacker"... **N.T. Transline**
- Our weapons:
 - The Word of God

5Let the godly ones exult in glory; let them sing for joy on their beds. 6 Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand, 7To execute vengeance on the nations and punishment on the peoples, 8To bind their kings with chains and their nobles with fetters of iron,9To execute on them the judgment written; this is an honor for all His godly ones. Praise the LORD! **Psalm 149:5-9 NASB**

And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. **Ephesians 6:17 NASB**

For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. **Hebrews 4:12 NASB**

- The name of Jesus:

Through You we will push back our adversaries; through Your name we will trample down those who rise up against us. **Psalm 44:5 NASB**

Jesus answered, "The foremost is, 'HEAR, O ISRAEL! THE LORD OUR GOD IS ONE LORD: **Mark 12:29 NASB**

19Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing will injure you. 20Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven." **Luke 10:19-20 NASB**

And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death. **Revelations 12:11 NASB**

- The Blood of Jesus

22But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, 23to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, 24and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel. **Hebrews 12:22-24 NASB**

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And through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, *I say*, whether things on earth or things in heaven. **Colossians 1:20 NASB**

- The word of our testimony
- Our willingness to die to our own agenda

And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death. **Revelation 12:11 NASB**

- The gifts of the Holy Spirit
 - Word of Knowledge
 - Word of Wisdom
 - Prophetic Words

- An upright life.

Those who forsake the law praise the wicked, but those who keep the law strive with them. **Proverbs 28:4 NASB**

But to those who rebuke the *wicked* will be delight, and a good blessing will come upon them. **Proverbs 24:25**

The exercise of justice is joy for the righteous but is terror to the workers of iniquity. **Proverbs 21:15 NASB**

Breaking a stronghold.

- This is not deliverance.
- Strongholds are proof that the enemy has done his work, not that he is doing his work.
- Don't view this 'outwardly' (**2 Corinthians 10:7**)

This is not done with our devices...it takes weapons that God empowered.

5Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: "jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us"? 6But He gives a greater grace. Therefore, *it says*, "GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE." 7Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. 8Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. 9Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. 10Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you. **James 4:5-10 NASB**

- Steps you can take
 - Assurance of your salvation
 - Know that God is a God of breakthrough.
 - Identity these strongholds
 - Confess the wrong thinking and related sins and break agreement with them.
 - Ask and receive forgiveness
 - Partner with God in proclaiming and visualizing the demolition of the stronghold.
 - Freshly surrender your life to God (**Romans 12:1-2**) and ask Him to renew your mind.