

DEMOLISHING STRONGHOLDS

2 Cor 10:3-5
October 30, 2011

INTRODUCTION: Wuest Word Studies translates, *“for the weapons of our warfare are not human but mighty in God’s sight, resulting in the demolition of fortresses, demolishing reasonings and every haughty mental elevation which lifts itself up against the experiential knowledge (which we believers have) of God, and leading captive every thought into the obedience to the Christ.”*

The **“strongholds”** (fortresses) in view here are not demons, but ideologies. The battle is with the false ideologies man and demons propagate so that the world believes them. Men and women that have never trusted Christ alone for salvation are inside their fortresses of ideas, which become their prisons and eventually their tombs, unless they are delivered from them by belief in the truth.

Paul further defined sinners’ strongholds of ideas as **“every high thing,”** that is, every unbiblical system of thought exalted as truth, that is, **“exalts itself against the knowledge of God.”** Spiritual warfare is a battle for the minds of people who are captives to lies that are exalted in opposition to Scripture.

The objective of our warfare is to change how people think, **“taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.”** To do so, the proper weapon is necessary. To assault and throw down the **stronghold** of false religions, opinions, beliefs, and philosophies, only one weapon will suffice: **the truth.** That is so obvious that Paul does not mention it. Only one thing exposes and corrects lies: **the truth.** The only offensive weapon in the Christian soldier’s armor is **“the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”** (Eph 6:17)

Spiritual warfare is an ideological conflict, fought in the mind by assaulting the proud fortresses of ideas that sinners erect against the truth.

1 Corinthians 3:20, “The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile.”

1 Corinthians 1:18-19, “For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written: ‘I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.’”

Romans 1:16-17, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’”

The only hope for the unsaved is the Gospel that leads to *repentance* – a change of mind.

How about the *believer* who has a stronghold?

“Every temptation originates with a thought which turns into a desire. And then we are presented with a choice.”

Charles Stanley

Proverbs 4:23

**“Keep your heart with all diligence,
For out of it spring the issues of life.”**

Proverbs 23:7, “For as he thinks in his heart, so is he.”

*“Sow a thought, reap an action.
Sow an action, reap a habit.
Sow a habit, reap a character.
Sow a character, reap a destiny!”*

I. STRONGHOLDS LEAD TO DENIAL.

Key Words: Rationalizing, justifying, and minimizing our behavior; also blame.

“Temptation is Satan looking through the keyhole of my life and desiring to come in. Sin is opening the door and inviting or allowing him in.”

We sometimes choose to open doors and windows into our lives that are very easily opened, but very difficult to close. The enemy resists us when we try to close, but helps us when we try to open.

“Most strongholds develop as repetitive attempts move away from pain and more toward pleasure.”
Three components: the lies, painful emotions, and self-defeating behaviors. These are strongly defended (thus a stronghold) through a variety of defense mechanisms such as denial, rationalizations, minimizations, and blame.

To find **freedom**, many are willing to do something, but few are willing to do what it takes. For example, merely confessing (partial obedience) the sinful behavior (one piece of the package) and promising/determining not to do it anymore (in one’s own strength, the flesh) leads to more failure (more shame and isolation) and doubt in the faithfulness of God, the truth of His Word, and the power of His Spirit (thus leading to more hopelessness and vicious cycle continues).

The reality is that Jesus’ way is difficult, but ends in life (or getting your life back). Satan’s way is easy, even fun at first; seemingly meeting some needs, but ends in death. People choose the seemingly fun/easier/pleasurable even to the point of idolatry. (It becomes bigger than God).

It is usually some **crisis** that causes a **stronghold** to get found out; the sin they covered gets exposed.

**Proverbs 10:9, “ He who walks with integrity walks securely,
But he who perverts his ways will become known.”**

Galatians 6:7-8, “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.”

DEFINITION OF A STRONGHOLD

The enemy exploits the normal processes that occur within the mind of every person. When left undetected, the enemy's activity results in a cluster of deeply held misbeliefs (lies) that directly or indirectly attack the character of God, and imply that He can't be trusted and/or that I am not, or cannot be loved by Him; these misbeliefs can operate on a conscious or unconscious level. These misbeliefs were accumulated through our life experiences and are charged with painful emotions. As a result, the lie feels much more powerful than the truth. These painful emotions are managed with/through a variety of self-defeating/sinful behaviors (coping strategies; flesh) that initially brought a sense of relief and therefore became deeply engrained into one's lifestyle. However, in due time, these coping strategies become part of the problem, reinforcing one's self-destructive/sinful lifestyle and deepening a person's sense of helplessness, hopelessness, shame, and alienation from God. Outright demonic oppression exacerbates this process, furthering one's feelings of defeat and difficulty trusting in the Lord's goodness."

II. STRONGHOLDS CAN BE DEMOLISHED.

“weapons of our warfare are not carnal (of the flesh), but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds (the enemy's base of operation is our thought life). Casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God (misbeliefs or accusations about the character of God) bringing every thought into captivity (catching and evaluating our thoughts) to the obedience of Christ (replacing the lies with truth).

HOW TO DEMOLISH:

**Proverbs 28:13, “He who covers his sins will not prosper,
But whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.”**

1. Convicted that the stronghold is sin and you cannot defeat it in your strength (flesh).

1 Thess 1:9, “how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God.”

(not from idols to God)

2. Confess to God and others.

Note: 1 John 1:9 and James 5:16

Isolation promotes bondage, but true spiritual community promotes freedom.

Proverbs 18:1-2

**“A man who isolates himself seeks his own desire;
He rages against all wise judgment.
A fool has no delight in understanding,
But in expressing his own heart.”**

3. Receive the gift of Godly sorrow (repentance).

Humbly invite the Lord to allow us to see our stronghold through His eyes, promoting the gift of Godly sorrow that leads to a true repentance;

NOTE: II Cor 7:10.

4. Move from the fruit to the root.

Share with a trusted friend, allowing the roots of the pain to be exposed.

5. Receive God's comfort.

2 Corinthians 1:3-4, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God."

6. Take your thoughts captive.

Examine your thoughts by holding them up to the truth of God's Word. **(II Cor 10:5).**

7. Replace the lies with God's truth.

Reject lies, receive truth, replace lies.

8. Cultivate a lifestyle of intimacy with God and with others in His family.

ILLUSTRATE:

Strongholds keep us from enjoying God's best.

Prodigal Son – **Luke 16:11-32**

1. Thought his greatest resource was his "portion of goods," but his greatest resource was his Father.

Strongholds are illusions!

2. Far country always seems to beam with enchantment.

3. Far country always leads to wasteful living and severe famine.

4. Prodigal living always gives less than promised; "feeding swine."

5. He spent everything and it gave him nothing in return, "no one gave him anything."

Finally,

6. “Came to himself” – began to think

“I perish”

“I will arise and go to my father”

180° repentance.

“I am no longer worthy” – Humbleness

7. He had words of confession.

“I have sinned...”

9. Father had compassion.

“ran and fell on his neck and kissed him”

10. Best robe, ring, sandals, fatted calf, party.

This is the type welcome repentant sinners can expect when they come to the Father. The Prodigal brought his thoughts captive to the obedience of his Father.

Obedience gives you authority, credibility, and momentum to confront the enemies of truth. Captive thinking is pure thinking.