



Pulling Down Strongholds

2 Corinthians 10:3-5 *3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: 4 (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) 5 Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;*

· **Illustration:** A mother invited some people to dinner, then at the table asked her six-year-old daughter to say the blessing. “I wouldn’t know what to say,” she replied. “Just say what you hear Mommy say,” was the mother’s answer. The little girl bowed her head and after a long pause said, “Dear Lord, why on earth did I invite all these people to dinner?”

· **Spiritual warfare cannot be fought by just repeating someone else’s actions or phrases;** we must understand what we are doing and why we are doing it if we are going to be effective!

· **Satan has three main weapons against the church:**

1. The most obvious weapon is an active one called SIN.

- * Satan is known as the tempter (Matthew 4:3) and he is an expert with this weapon.
- * Sin seeks you out like a guided missile.
- * You know immediately when you are hit because the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23).

2. The second weapon is a passive one called ACCUSATIONS.

- * It is set up like a secret trap for you to fall into.
- * Satan is described as the accuser of the brethren (Job 1:6-12, Zechariah 3:1, Rev. 12:10)
- * If he has the courage to accuse you before God – who knows all the facts – imagine what he is capable of saying to us, mere mortals.
- * Even though we are forgiven, he reminds us of every sin we have ever committed.
- * Even though Jesus said He would never forsake us (Hebrews 13:5b), Satan screams that we have been forsaken because we are too bad for God to love or use.
- * **Hebrews 13:5b (KJV)** ... *for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.*
- * **Hebrews 13:5b (AMP)** ... *for He (God) Himself has said, I will not in any way fail you nor give you up nor leave you without support. [I will] not, [I will] not, [I will] not in any degree leave you helpless, nor forsake nor let [you] down, [relax My hold on you]. Assuredly not!*
- * Satan uses accusations to generate anxiety strong enough so that we will come out from under the mighty hand of God (1 Peter 5:6) – that’s why Peter admonishes us to cast all our care upon the Lord (1 Peter 5:7).
- * **1 Peter 5:6-8** *6 Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: 7 Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you. 8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:*
- * Satan’s objective is to paralyze us like an animal that has fallen into a trap (1 Peter 5:8-9); we know when this weapon has been successful because despair and fear take over.

3. The third weapon is the most dangerous because it lies dormant until activated!

- * The church in general is aware of the first two weapons because of Bible teaching and because their effects – spiritual death or paralysis – are visible motivators to get help.
- * The third weapon – **STRONGHOLDS** – is like an unseen landmine waiting to detonate.
- * We don't find out about it until we survey the destruction it has wreaked upon us.
- * Spiritual strongholds allow Satan to manipulate Christians, bringing great damage to themselves and others, and impeaching their Christian witness (like the Laodiceans).
- * This is consistent with Satan's treacherous character as a deceiver (John 8:44, Rev. 12:9).
- * The MIND is the access gate Satan uses to get at your spirit!
- * The only hope in battling strongholds (i.e. landmines) is to discover and disarm them.

Ed Silvano: "A spiritual stronghold is a mindset impregnated with hopelessness that causes us to accept as unchangeable situations that we know are contrary to the will of God."

- The Bible teaches us to forgive our enemies (Matthew 5:43-48) – it's a must! If you are incapable of forgiving a particular person, you should suspect a spiritual stronghold in your mind.
- The Bible tells us that he who finds a spouse "finds a good thing" (Proverbs 18:22) and that we are to become one flesh (Matthew 19:4-6). If you are powerless to change your feelings toward your spouse and feel hopeless, then you should suspect a spiritual stronghold in your mind.
- The Bible tells us that we must live holy lives (1 Peter 1:15-16). If you are unable to shake the creeping influence of worldly pleasures and priorities then you should suspect a spiritual stronghold.
- Any time the will of God is clearly spelled out but reality tells a different story in your life ... anytime you are powerless to change the reality perceived by your mind ... anytime you have accepted defeat because the situation looks hopeless ... **SUSPECT A STRONGHOLD.**
- **HOW DO HUMAN BEINGS ACT WHEN THERE IS A STRONGHOLD IN THEIR MIND?**
- Strongholds expose a severe inconsistency between what we SAY and what we BELIEVE.
- We cope with them by erecting a "**partition**" which separates our mind into two compartments. (1 Corinthians 10:5 – "*every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God*")
- On one side is the knowledge of God; on the other side is human speculation. **A speculation is a conclusion based on an assumption that cannot be proven!**
- This fragmentation makes us develop what James describes as a "double mind" – instability.
- **James 1:8** *A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.*
- When such believers are convicted they bail out by using rationalizations to defend themselves.
- How can we believe one thing in church and another in the parking lot? **A DOUBLE MIND!**
- **CAN YOU IMAGINE THE DEVASTATING EFFECTS THAT A STRONGHOLD HAS?**
- Saints trying to believe God for a breakthrough in their church who cannot forgive a past hurt.
- Saints trying to believe God for a miracle in their city who cannot even enjoy their marriage.
- Saints trying to believe God for power to witness who do not even have the power to live holy.
- **AND SATAN SCREAMS, "DON'T YOU DARE BELIEVE IT! LOOK AT YOUR SITUATION!"**
- When Christians know the will of God and do otherwise, Satan is able to blackmail them.

· **HOW DO YOU PULL DOWN A STRONGHOLD?**

· Strongholds are to be destroyed, not just repainted or covered up with wallpaper!

· There are **four steps** to be taken to accomplish this, all given in **James 4**:

***James 4:7-10** 7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8 Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. 9 Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. 10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.*

1. SUBMIT TO GOD.

- Determine the will of God by God's Word, then choose to believe it and to obey it.
- Tear down the partition that has allowed you to store two opposing truths in your mind.
- Call truth "TRUTH" in spite of your feelings if necessary.
- Re-enter the battlefield!

2. RESIST THE DEVIL.

- The most effective way to resist him is to die to your old self, putting yourself out of his reach.
- In Christ, everything is certain and proven. Quote the Scripture to him: "It is written!"

3. DRAW NEAR TO GOD ... AND HE WILL DRAW NEAR TO YOU.

- We need to draw close to Him because our "speculations" have allowed us to drift away.
- Cross the threshold of fear and rejection – Jesus promises that He will draw near to you!

4. CLEANSE YOUR HANDS ... AND PURIFY YOUR HEARTS.

- Our hands refer to the "outward dimension" while our hearts refer to the "inward dimension."
- The visible symptom is easier to deal with than the inner root cause (ie. immoral relationship).
- A stronghold has been destroyed only when a double-minded person becomes single-minded!
- When we sin, we usually plead guilty but reserve the right to say something on our behalf!
- That perpetuates a double mind! Instead, we should turn our laughter into mourning!
- Only as you see the ugliness of your sin will you be drawn to God's holiness and fully repent.
- For Christians, persistence is the opposite of instability! Hammer away at your wall of arguments!
- Use God's Word like a sledgehammer on your circumstances, and hit those situations repeatedly! Day in and day out! Sooner or later the first crack will appear! And then it's just a matter of time!