

TEARING DOWN STRONGHOLDS

Experiencing Freedom and Victory In Christ

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In Luke 4:18-19, Jesus told us, *“The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed; To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord”* (NKJV).

Jesus came to set us free. It is the work of the enemy to hold us in bondage. Jesus told us in John 10:10, *“The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more **abundantly**”* (NJKV). This word **abundantly** is *perissos* in the Greek (*per-is-sos*, Strong’s #4058). It means *“superabundant (in quantity) or superior (in quality); excessive; exceeding abundantly above, very highly, beyond measure.”*

Jesus came to bring us superabundant life. It is important for us to ask ourselves—*Am I experiencing the abundant life that Jesus came to give me? Am I walking in the freedom and liberty that Jesus desires for me?* As we begin this lesson, it will be helpful for us to pray, *“Lord, Please give me wisdom and insight to walk in Your abundant life. Help me to recognize and tear down every stronghold of the enemy. Help me to walk in Your Truth and Your Anointing that sets captives free, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.”*

In this lesson, we are going to look at hindrances Scripture calls strongholds. We are also going to look at Biblical strategies for tearing them down. We want to tear down every stronghold of the enemy. The only stronghold we want in our life is the stronghold of the Lord (Psalm 27). The strongholds of the enemy produce bondage and fear, but the stronghold of the Lord produces freedom and confidence.

We read in 2 Corinthians 10:3-5, *“For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”*

The strongholds of our enemy are fortresses in our minds where wrong thoughts and wrong attitudes are protected. They are fortresses of thoughts that set themselves up against the knowledge of God. They are lies that hold us in bondage and rob us of abundant life.

Some examples of enemy strongholds: worry, all kinds of fears, anxiety, insecurity, rejection, loneliness, depression, discouragement, doubt, unbelief, shame, guilt, grief, loss of hope, loss of vision, unworthiness, pride, bitterness, unforgiveness, rebellion, stubbornness, jealousy, religious error, doctrinal error, judgmental thoughts, deception, delusion, control, manipulation, lust, sexual impurity, all forms of addiction and compulsive behavior, etc.

The strongholds of thoughts that hold us in bondage are not fleeting thoughts. They are thoughts that gain strong ground in our minds. We want to learn to recognize every wrong thought and every wrong attitude, so that we can tear them down, and put them under the cleaning blood of Jesus Christ. We want our thoughts to line up with God's thoughts concerning us. We want the Holy Spirit to redirect and reprogram our thoughts and our actions, so that we can walk in the freedom and liberty that Jesus came to bring us.

The word **stronghold**, from 2 Corinthians 10:4, is *ochuroma* (*okh-oo'-ro-mak*, Strong's #3794). It means, "to fortify through the idea of holding safely." If the devil can get us to believe his lies, he can hold us in bondage to those lies. It is very important that we stop agreeing with the lies of our enemy! We do not want to give any lie a fortified place in our thoughts. On the other hand, we want to fortify the Truth of God's Word.

We want to start agreeing with God! As we yield to the Holy Spirit and the revelation of Scriptural Truth, the lies of our enemy will be exposed. The Holy Spirit will reveal Truth to us, and He will enable us to come into agreement with that Truth.

Paul tells us to "**demolish arguments**" in 2 Corinthians 10:5. The word argument, from the Greek, is *logismos* (*log-is-mos'*, Strong's #3053). It can be translated thoughts or imaginations. The arguments that we want to demolish are thoughts and imaginations in our minds that set themselves up against the Truth of God.

Paul tells us to "**demolish every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God.**" The word *pretension* in the Greek is *hupsoma* (*hoop'-so-mah*, Strong's #3053). *Hupsoma* is an "elevated place or thing." In other words, it is a thought that elevates itself above the Truth of God's Word. It pretends to be true, but it is a lie.

Satan will tempt us to question God's Word, just as he tempted Eve in Genesis chapter three. He wants us to question the promises and the instructions of God's Word, so that we will not hold to the Truth that sets us free (John 8:31-32). Satan's primary weapon is the lie. Our defense against him is the Truth.

Sources of Strongholds

1. The World

From the first day we are born into this world, we are fed a steady stream of information that shapes our thoughts, our opinions, and our attitudes. Many of the beliefs and values that motivate us come from *systems of thought* that we have received from people in our lives, from television, from movies, from music, from books, etc. It is important for us to allow the Holy Spirit to reveal to us the things that we have received from these sources that do not line up with the Truth of the Word of God.

2. Our Negative Personal Experiences

Experiences that cause hurt and trauma can be open doors for the enemy and his lies. Emotional wounds and traumas can open doors for spirits of rejection, depression, fear, worry, anxiety, etc, etc.

There are times when negative experiences leave us believing something that is different from the promises and the evidence of Scripture. 2 Cor. 5:7 tells us, *“We live by faith, not by sight.”* We want to build our faith on the promises and Truth of God’s Word, not on what we see or feel in the natural realm.

3. Acts of the Sinful Nature

Sin is an open door for demonic strongholds. All kinds of wrong thoughts and wrong attitudes are formed through the acts of the sinful nature (Galatians 5:19-21). If we want to walk in freedom, it is essential that we repent of our sin and receive the grace, forgiveness, and love of God.

4. Generational Strongholds and Curses

Generational sin can affect our lives. We read in Exodus 20:5, *“...for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation...”* If our forefathers were trapped in sin that has not been confessed and repented, that sin can affect us (Is. 65:6-7). Daniel prayed and confessed the sins of his people, the children of Israel, while they were living in captivity in Babylon (Daniel 9:1-19).

Prayer for breaking generational strongholds and curses: *“Lord, I confess to You my sins along with the sins of my family and my forefathers. I ask for Your complete forgiveness and cleansing of every sin in my life and in my family history. I put these sins under the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ, and I thank You for Your mercy and grace. I thank You that these sins will not affect my life or my children’s lives from this day forward. I break every generational curse over my family in the authority of the of the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”*

5. Wrong Doctrines

There may have been times when we have accepted teaching that sounded good and seemed accurate, but in reality, it was not true according to Scripture. We need to stay very sensitive to the Word and to the leadership of the Holy Spirit to reveal error to us. We need to be willing to change if we are wrong in our theology in any area.

Paul warns us in Colossians 2:8, *“See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.”*

A good way to gauge whether or not a doctrine is accurate is to look at the fruit it produces. Is it producing freedom or bondage? Jesus came to set us free. When we walk in His Truth, we will see the fruit of *“love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control”* being produced in our lives (Gal. 5:22-23).

6. Counterfeit Spiritual Experiences

It is important for us to ask the Lord to reveal to us any involvement we have had in occult practices or false religious practices. There may have been some counterfeit experiences in which we have been involved that we are not aware were counterfeits.

A counterfeit is an imitation of something genuine with the intention to deceive. Satan loves to imitate the supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit in order to deceive us and hold us

in bondage. He has a counterfeit for every gift of the Spirit. Anytime we seek power, supernatural knowledge, or peace through a source that is not the Holy Spirit, we are opening ourselves up to a counterfeit.

Scripture tells us in Ephesians 2:14, *“He himself (Jesus) is our peace.”* Jesus told us, *“When He, the Spirit of Truth, comes, He will guide you into all Truth” (John 16:13).* He told us, *“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you” (Acts 1:8).* The Spirit of God will counsel us, comfort us and empower us. Through the power of the Spirit, we will find peace, comfort, direction, freedom, and victory.

TWENTY BIBICAL STRATEGIES FOR TEARING DOWN STRONGHOLDS

“The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.” 2 Corinthians 10:4

1. Make a Quality Decision to Tear Down Every Stronghold (lie) of the Enemy.

The Lord told the Children of Israel in Deut. 30:19, *“I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life so that you and your children may live.”* It is important that we reject every lie of the enemy, and in turn, accept the Truth from God’s Word that sets us free (John 8:31-32). We choose Truth and Life!

[Lord, Make me willing to be willing to do Your will!]

2. Ask God for Wisdom and Revelation.

We read in James 1:5, *“If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault.”* Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you every lie of the enemy, and then ask Him to reveal Truth to you from His Word. *“But when He, the Spirit of Truth, comes, He will guide you into all Truth” (John 16:13).*

3. Repent (Change Your way of Thinking), and Confess Your Sins.

Repentance is the door to freedom. When we repent, we change our way of thinking to God’s way of thinking. He will help us if we will simply confess our sins and receive His mercy. We read in Proverbs 28:13, *“He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy.”* We are promised in 1 John 1:9, *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”*

4. Determine to Walk in Forgiveness and Love.

Unforgiveness is an open door for strongholds, but forgiveness is the door to freedom. We want to make sure we receive God’s forgiveness, and we want to make sure we forgive others as He forgives us (Matt. 6:12). We do not want to be tormented in our thoughts because we are holding unforgiveness in our hearts (Matthew 18:21-35).

Jesus told us in Mark 11:25, “*When you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.*”

5. Plead the Blood of Jesus Over Every Negative Thought, Every Painful Memory, and Every Lie of the Enemy.

In Exodus chapter 12, the Lord instructed the Israelites to take hyssop and apply the blood of the Passover lamb to the doorframes of their homes for protection from the plague. Hyssop is symbolic of faith. It is by faith that we apply the blood of Jesus to our lives today.

We read in Revelation 12:11 that believers overcame the accuser of the brethren “*by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony.*” Proclaim that Jesus is Lord of your life, and plead the blood of Jesus over your life.

6. Ask God to Fill You with His Spirit.

In Ephesians 5:18 we are instructed to, “*...Be filled with the Spirit.*” We need the Holy Spirit’s help in everything we do.

7. Submit Yourself to God and Resist the Devil.

We read in James 4:7, “*Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you*” (KJV). Obedient submission brings tremendous victories to our lives. When we are submitted to Jesus, we walk in His authority and His power. From the place of submission and humility (the place of total dependence on God), we resist the devil and he flees from us.

8. Offer Yourself as a Living Sacrifice to God.

We are instructed in Romans 12:1-2, “*...offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will.*”

[Lord, I offer myself to You as a living sacrifice. Renew my mind, Do everything in me You need to do, so that I can be everything You want me to be.]

9. Make Daily Deposits of God’s Word in Your Heart.

We are told in Romans 10:17, “*Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God*” (NKJV). It is so important for us to spend time in the Word (Joshua 1:8, Proverbs 4:20-22). If we are going to be mighty in faith, we need to spend time daily meditating on the Word of God.

When our son, Michael, was struggling with anxiety attacks, he wrote Scripture on index cards and carried them with him everywhere he went. Whenever he would feel anxious, he would pull out his cards and meditate on Scripture

promises. It was an amazing help to him. Through holding to the Truth of God's Word, He learned to walk in freedom and victory.

10. "Take Captive Every Thought to make it Obedient to Christ" (2 Cor. 10:5).

In every situation, we want to ask ourselves, "What is the mind of Christ in this situation?" We want to make sure our thoughts line up with the Word of God. We want to think excellent and praiseworthy thoughts (Philippians 4:8).

11. Guard What You Say.

Proverbs 18:21 tells us, "*The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit.*" We want to stay yielded and sensitive to the Holy Spirit to help us guard our words, so that we can speak life and not death to ourselves and to others.

12. Put on the Full Armor of God (Ephesians 6:10-18).

We read in Ephesians 6:10-11, "*Be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.*"

How do we put on the full armor of God? We put on the armor of God through prayer and through spending time in the Word.

13. Be Anxious for Nothing—Pray About Everything.

Philippians 4:6-7 tells us, "*Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*"

We read in 1 Peter 5:7, "*Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you.*" Ephesians 2:14 tells us, "*For he himself (Jesus) is our peace.*"

14. Give Thanks in All Circumstances.

1 Thessalonians 5:18 instructs us, "*Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.*"

We are told in Ephesians 5:20, "*Always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*"

15. Spend Time Daily Praising and Worshiping God.

We read in Psalm 8:2, "*From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise because of your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger.*"

Praise will silence and defeat our enemy (see 2 Chronicles, chapter 20). Through praise and worship, we draw near to God and He draws near to us.

16. Make Sure You are Walking by Faith and not by Sight.

2 Corinthians 5:7 tells us, *“We live by faith, not by sight.”*

17. Humble Yourself and Receive God’s Grace.

James 4:6 tells us, *“God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”*

[Humility—The place of entire dependence on God. – Andrew Murray]

[Humility—Nothing to fear, nothing to prove, nothing to lose, and nothing to hide. Grace—God’s enabling presence, giving us the ability to do what we need to do and to be what we need to be. – James Ryle]

18. Speak to the Mountains in Your Life.

Jesus told us in Mark 11:23, *“I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, ‘Go throw yourself into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him.”*

Jesus has given us the awesome ability to speak to mountains. When I discovered that the mountains in my life were the obstacles that I face, I decided to start speaking to mountains.

From the time our daughter Mindy was a little girl, she struggled with homesickness every time she was away from home. Even in her late teens, she found herself struggling with the same problem. On one of her out-of-town trips, when she called for prayer, I spoke to the mountain of homesickness and commanded it to go from her in Jesus’ name. The feeling of homesickness left her, and she was able to enjoy the rest of her trip.

19. Always Remember, There is Power in the Name of Jesus.

Jesus gave us an amazing promise in John 14:12-14, *“I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.”*

20. Thank God for the Victory and Exercise Patience.

Jesus told us in Mark 11:24, *“Whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.”* We want to thank God for the victory before we see the answer. We are told in Hebrews 6:12, *“Imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.”* It is so important that we learn to exercise patience. With some strongholds, it may take persevering faith to see them come down. However, as we persevere, we will see the faithfulness of God!

SCRIPTURAL TRUTHS TO CONFESS OVER YOUR LIFE

Galatians 2:20: *“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”*

Romans 8: 28: *“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”*

Romans 8:31: *“If God is for us, who can be against us?”*

Romans 8:35-39: *“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ...*

*37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.
38 For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39 neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

Psalms 103:2-5: *“Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits—*

*3 who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases,
4 who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with
love and compassion,*

*5 who satisfies your desires with good things
so your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.”*

2 Corinthians 4:18: *“So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.”*

2 Corinthians 5:7: *“We live by faith, not by sight.”*

2 Corinthians 5:17: *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!”*

2 Corinthians 5:21: *“God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.”*

Philippians 4:13: *“I can do everything through Him who gives me strength.”*

Philippians 4:19: *“And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.”*

2 Timothy 1:7: *“For God did not give us a spirit of timidity (of cowardice, of craven and cringing and fawning fear), but [He has given us a spirit] of power and of love and of calm and well-balanced mind and discipline and self-control”(Amp).*

Hebrews 13:5: *“...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!]” (Amp).*

“Lord, I commit my life to You today, everything I am and everything I hope to be. I ask for Your forgiveness and cleansing for every sin in my life. I confess that You are my Savior and Lord. In Your name Lord Jesus, I surrender myself completely to You.”

(Unless otherwise indicated all Scripture is taken from the NIV Bible.)

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