

FACING THE STRONGHOLDS OF LIFE!

II Cor. 10:3-5; Eph. 6:10-14

Introduction:

Some things we want to look at today...

- What Is a Stronghold?
- How Do Strongholds Begin?
- What Are My Strongholds?
- How Can I Overcome MY Strongholds?

I. WHAT IS A STRONGHOLD?

A. The word means, “a citadel, or a fortress within,” in the heart and life.

It means a fortress, a fort, something solid or firm. A stronghold is an area in the life of the Christian where sin is entrenched where the devil has access to the life to bring further sin and failure.

Illustration: When Sudan Hussein ran over Kuwait -- he built a stronghold there, and as he invaded their army was literally buried in the desert sand as they were entrenched there.

B. Strongholds are areas of weakness within: Heb. 12:1-2

There are areas of weakness in every Christian's life -- areas in which we are tempted, give in to sin -- over and over again and we build a stronghold of failure. There are areas in our lives where we have given ground to Satan. He has set up his attack, we have given him ability to work in our hearts as we have given him footholds that bring defeat!

We can't say -- *well I am never tempted* -- **Never say, never** -- we may well fail in a certain area.

C. A stronghold is some area of our lives where we have allowed Satan to be entrenched.

He has a vested interest in our lives to defeat us, keep us from really counting for God. He endeavors to have some areas of control where he can bring further sin and ruin. We have given him an area of entrance into our lives -- thus he influences, seeks to control. We give him right of access -- mentally or physical habits of life where Satan gets in and we allowed it by our choice, by the action of our wills.

D. A stronghold then is where sin captivates, and controls us. --

E. A stronghold is a area where the fleshly, carnal nature... sin nature is allowed to control.

II. HOW DO STRONGHOLDS BEGIN?

We must be honest, deadly serious, look into the mirror of our hearts -- see ourselves, be honest about our own weaknesses... our besetting sins. We easily have *pockets of resistance within*, for sin is often enjoyable and we cuddle it, hold on to it, support the sin, and desire it. We may even begin to observe the weakness in the lives of our children.

A. It begins in our thought life:

1. They begin in the mind (Matt. 12:33-35; Prov. 23:7) they can become an obsession.
 - a. Thoughts and sinful desire get lodged in the heart.
 - b. They get into the sub-conscious, are enjoyed for they are some thought or some evil imagination that the sin nature enjoys.
2. They begin through TV viewing, reading, etc.

Be careful what you watch/ what you read. It all may seem to be so innocent, may seem harmless... the evil becomes a little pocket of resistance for we resist the truth.
3. They begin through friendships --
 - a. who we see, visit with, peers who impact our lives... and
 - b. our values, convictions, priorities, etc.
4. Consider the process --
 - a. We make decision of the **will** -- that certain things are harmless -- really does not matter.
 - b. Then we find ourselves **attached**, hold by it **emotionally** we are also involved.
 - c. Just a little toe-hold of sin -- we **confess** it; but **continue** it and **embrace** it.
 - d. Then we **rationalize** it; defend it - allow Satan to have control as we feel **comfortable** with the sinful action or thoughts.
 - e. Then we are **blind** to it... **justify** it; for we think it does not really matter.

III. WHAT ARE MY STRONGHOLDS?

A. Remember the lost fall into many strongholds that keep them enticed in sin, doubting God's plan of salvation even if they hear it. Often it is the unbelief of the lost.

1. II Cor. 3:3,4 The unsaved are Gospel blinded, not willing to accept Christ but are closed of heart, and mind. WHY? (Read and study II Corinthians 10:3-5.)
2. They have strongholds of sin, thoughts, ideas, philosophies of life, etc. I Cor. 2:14
 - a. false doctrine
 - b. agnosticism
 - c. false religions
 - d. evolution; new age religion, etc.
3. Salvation is so simple. They don't want to accept God's plan, or its simplicity for the feel they must work for it.
4. They don't want to accept a literal HELL.

B. Then there are the strongholds in the lives of the saved:

1. An **Inconquerable lust** -- We can give into evil desires over a long period of time.

- a. A young man gets involved with pornography and develops a stronghold of lust which allows evil practices and evil desires.
- b. There is an addiction of some kind, an obsession for some kind of sin in the life. These can be many and varied.

2. An **uncontrolled habit -- in the life.**

We are not to be brought under the power of any habit or we may become a bond-slave to sin. Consider Romans 6:16-17. This could be a persistent habit or a stronghold such as an uncontrolled TV. Paul wrote “not all things are expedient, it may be lawful” but can be damaging and he decided he would not be brought under the power of any.

Often the stronghold is the world’s music. It is said that 50,000 a day come to Branson, Missouri to hear the lyrics of Country Western. And what is most of it about? Often lust, sinful desire, etc. If you doubt this, then listen to a country western radio station and note what the lyrics are about. What are they pushing? -- the world’s amusements and the world’s dress, it’s lust and every kind of wicked desire.

Where does America get its fashions? Years ago Spurgeon said, “*England gets it fashions from France and France gets them from hell!*” It is any different today? ***God must have control of the thought life, so He can give us victory.*** (Rom. 12:2; Phil. 4:8)

3. An **uncontrolled attitude -- II Cor. 7:1,2**

We need victory over the flesh and the spirit. **I Pet. 2:1-3** What about the sins of the spirit -- envy, jealous, pride, criticalness, gossip, negative attitudes, malice, resentments, bitterness. Are they not as damaging and do they not often bring us to defeat as much as the lusts of the flesh? We need to be transparent, fully honest before the Lord about these things. **Psa. 51:10**

4. An **unrestrained anger --**

- a. How easy it is for a Christian husband, wife to have a problem with continued, excessive, constant anger, unrestrained.. and think nothing of it.
- b. We can have a problem so long, that we don’t face it; we don’t even consider it to be so sinful or that we are defeated by such sin. Read every verse in the Word of God that deals with anger and allow the Holy Spirit to convict you if this a stronghold in your life. (Study some of our materials on the web... in the section on counseling. The book of Emotional Problems found in that section could be a great help to you.)

5. An **unreasonable fear -- II Tim. 1:7**

- a. Christians ought not be in bondage to unfounded fears.
- b. Many people have persistent fears that are rooted in the mind. Fear is often a result of our lack of a faith walk, of obedience and dedicated ministry.
- c. We built images in our thought life -- thoughts of rejection, of the fear of failure, the fear of man which become a stronghold in the life. **Phil. 4:6-7; Psa. 24:14**

6. An ongoing neglect of prayer and the Word of God;

A missionary struggled in his heart as he always struggled with prayer. He also struggled with immoral, evil thoughts that plagued him; he almost gave up and was ready to leave the field. Someone suggested that he call his neglect of prayer a sin and that he must overcome this. He worked at building a prayer life he never had before. Then he had a new victory he never had before.... *Be not overcome of evil but overcome evil with good.* (Rom. 12:21)

*Here is a list of sins that may control us, **how about you?** love of money; materialism, selfishness, evil associations, liquor, smoking, evil habits, major battles with spouse/ loved ones/ self-pity, indifference, laziness, lying, pouting, hardness, harshness, hostilities?*

IV. HOW CAN I OVERCOME MY STRONGHOLDS:

A. **II Cor. 10:3-5** --- I must realize that I am in a warfare and that victory can be mine --

1. **Rom. 8:37; Eph. 6:10;**
2. **II Cor. 2:11; Rom. 6:14**

B. **I must reject my sinful thoughts -- face where my thinking is wrong --**

Dr. Bob Jones Sr. said, "*After a person is saved, every personal problem in their life could be corrected if they would have a proper mental adjustment Biblically toward their problem*"

I must think Biblically!

1. **I must face my strongholds as sinful, wrong.** (II Cor. 10:3-5)
 - a. There must be rejection of the strongholds! I must hate them.
 - b. There must be repentance -- **humiliation** **Psa. 51:17; James 4:6-10; I Pet. 5:5-10**
 - c. There must be replacement -- *casting down imaginations; every high thing that exalts itself against God; bring into captivity every thought to be obedience of Christ.*
2. **Actions are rooted in the thoughts** -- actions are on the outside but they are rooted in the thoughts that are on the inside. We must submit to Christ for all the thoughts of my heart must be yielded to Him so I can obey from the heart. **Rom. 6:16-17**
3. There must be a **submission of the will to God** no matter how we feel about it. Declare to satan you **are free** from his control in your life. -- resist him -- James 4:7 come against the stronghold in Jesus power for victory!
4. There must be yieldedness of the life -- **Rom. 12:1 - 2**