

WEEK 4 - STRONGHOLDS

1. Introduction

- a. **Recap** – we are in a Spiritual battle

Week One – Our Original Design (God has made us)

“For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”

Ephesians 2:10

Week Two – We live in Two Realms (e.g. Elisha’s servant - 2 Kings 6)

“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”

Ephesians 6:12

Week 3 - Rebellion and Repentance (We are in a spiritual battle, Jesus has defeated the enemy)

“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.”

2 Corinthians 10:3-5

- b. **This is a battle for truth**

“Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

John 8:32

- c. **A battle for our minds**

“Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform 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.”

Romans 12:1-2

“Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.”

Phil 4:8

2. What is a stronghold?

- a. **Natural – Strongholds serve as:** Base of operations, Military camps; Fortified defences (for a territory); Base of operations; Home; Headquarters, Eg Beachhead on D-Day, Lord of the Rings – Helms Deep

In themselves Strongholds - Neither good nor bad – it's who or what is operating out of them.

"The Lord is my light and my salvation— whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life— of whom shall I be afraid? "

Psalm 27:1

b. **Unhealthy Spiritual Strongholds**

"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."

2 Corinthians 10:3-5

A stronghold is an ingrained pattern of behaviour or thinking which becomes part of who we are and blocks the work of God in our lives.

- Reasonings, attitudes and beliefs, thoughts and values that are in opposition to God's truth –about life and about God.
- Satan's strategy is to get individuals, couples, families, churches, communities, cultures, institutions, organisations to buy into beliefs and values that are in opposition to God's truth, off the centre-line of God's plumb line of truth.
- God's truth is absolute. The liberating power that breaks the hold of the enemy.
- Every degree of opposition to God's truth that we accept, in every area of life, is room given to Satan to establish his strongholds, or base of operations in your life.
- Pride, independence from God, self-sufficiency are all trade-marks of being raised up against God.
- Satan is never satisfied with one stronghold

3. How Do Strongholds become established?

Strongholds are built by allowing the enemy to have 'place' or 'opportunity' in our life through sin.

a. **Topos – Foothold**

The Greek word for 'foothold' is 'topos', which means; a place, piece of ground, legally owned area of territory or opportunity.

Story of Cain and Abel – "If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it."

Gen 4:7

"In your anger do not sin': Don't let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold."

Ephesians 4:26-27

"I will not speak with you much longer, for the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold on me, but the world must learn that I love the Father and that I do exactly what my Father has commanded me'

John 14:30

b. How Topos builds into a Stronghold

Even though believing followers of Jesus Christ belong to God, they can give Satan a place or jurisdiction in their lives through unconfessed, unrepented sin. Or through lies we have consistently believed.

Satan's stronghold construction begins with our thoughts. This is why Paul says that our transformation as believers begins with the renewing of our mind.

c. Examples

Tip of the iceberg

The cotton reel threads

d. Examples of Strongholds:

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| • Greed | • Hopelessness |
| • Worry | • Jealousy/Envy |
| • Fear | • Rebellion |
| • Anger | • Unbelief |
| • Anxiety | • Rejection |
| • Insignificance | • Shame |
| • Superiority/Pride/Arrogance | • Unforgiveness |
| • Control | • Self pity |

4. How do these foundational thoughts get access in the first place?

Strongholds don't just happen, they have roots and foundations. The enemy can gain access to our lives in a number of ways. Including:

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| • Love Deprivation | • The Occult |
| • Curses | • Trauma or Abuse |
| • Soul Ties | • Our own sinful choices |
| • Generational sin e.g. Freemasonry/Fear/Superiority | |

5. Pulling down Strongholds

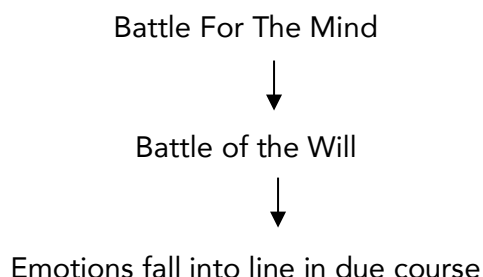
We pull down strongholds with repentance and faith, the simplest way is to use the 5rs (from last week) – these are - Recognise, Repent, Receive, Rebuke and Replace.

The first thing we must do in order to deal with a stronghold is to recognise what is there.

- a. **Recognise** - There are four ways in which these can be revealed to us.
 - I. **You know and everyone else knows** This is stuff which you and everyone who knows you well is aware of – these are without question the easiest to recognise (but not necessarily easy to deal with!)
 - II. **You know but no one else knows** This is stuff which you know about yourself but no one else knows. This might be a particular sin pattern spurned out of something which happened to you in your past – again, these are fairly easy to discern.
 - III. **Everyone else knows but you don't know** This is when other people see things in your lives which perhaps you have become blind to. For example, someone who constantly talks about their ex-partner (without realising) may well have developed a 'soul tie' with them. Others will know this, but it will require one of them to speak into your life, or for prophetic revelation.
 - IV. **Neither you, nor anyone else knows** – These are things which you are blind to, and others are as well. For example, an adult who, as a child watched a parent leave home may hold unresolved resentment towards that person without realising it. For this you will likely need prophetic revelation.
- b. **Repent** – Repent of believing the lies and letting the stronghold take root.
- c. **Receive** – God's forgiveness and fresh filling of the Holy Spirit.
- d. **Rebuke** – The work of the enemy and send him to the feet of Jesus.
- e. **Replace** - This will be a daily battle which will require us to be vigilant – we will need to:
 - I. Take every thought and imagination captive for Christ

"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"

2 Corinthians 10:4-6
 - II. Choose God's Truth to reign in our lives. Aligning everything within us to His Word



- III. Recognise the need for both 'air attack' (spiritual warfare prayer) and 'ground assault' (walking in the truth) are required to destroy Satan's strongholds

You may find it helpful to pray with others once you recognise a stronghold needs to be dealt with – or you could ask them to pray for you prophetically to discern strongholds you may not be able to see for yourself.

The core objective of this is to pray, regardless of if you do it alone or with others is to dismantle strongholds and remove the enemy's foothold – to reclaim the land!

6. The three tenses of salvation/freedom

- a. We have been saved from the penalty of sin
- b. We are being saved from the power of sin
- c. We will be saved from the presence of sin

KEY TRUTH

- The enemy's scheme is to turn footholds into strongholds.
- The War is about TRUTH

'Then you will know the TRUTH, and the TRUTH will set you FREE....'.

John 8:32

Groupwork

- I. If you were able to be with us, then tell the group about your own original design prayer

"For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

Ephesians 2:10

- II. What obvious strongholds are you aware of in your life? E.g. Anger/Fear/Anxiety...
- III. How do you respond to the idea that this pattern might be 'topos' for the enemy?
- IV. Pray for each other

Homework

- I. Spend time in quiet asking God to reveal an area of your life which has become a stronghold
- II. Pray through the 5 r's for any which He reveals to you (you can ask someone to help with these)
- III. Continue to do the work of replacing as above.

Freedom from "fear of man"

I. Fear is not from God

- 2 Tim 1:7 God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but of power, love & self-discipline
- Fear is the opposite of faith – eg Peter walking on water Matt 14

II. Freedom from fear is gained as we:

- Allow the Holy Spirit to uncover the presence of fear in us
- Bring fears to the cross through repentance & faith (choose to believe the truth & live it)

III. There are lots of things people are afraid of:

- Fear of things going wrong (God not caring for us)
 - So pray, go to church, give etc motivated by fear
 - Fear that God will make us suffer (physically, financially...)
 - Need to repent of believing a lie (God doesn't care) & choose to believe truth
- Fear of our past or of secret sins becoming known (shame)
 - Or of people finding out "what we're really like"
 - Bring these things to the light (best one-to-one)
- Fear of Man
 - Fear of what other people think about me
 - Fear (imagined) of what others say about me
 - Fear of being rejected by those close to me
 - Being more concerned with the approval of people than the approval of God
 - Fear about what others think that inhibits obedience to God
 - Desire to please people more than God (The "prat" level)

Joshua 1:9 "do not be afraid – the Lord your God will go with you"

Ps 23 "when I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.."

Ps 27:1 The Lord is my light and my salvation. Whom shall I fear?

Ps 46:1-2 God is our strength & refuge.. therefore we will not fear

Prov 29:25 "fear of man is a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is kept safe"

Is 41:13 "I am with you.. do not fear, I will help you"

Is 51:7 "do not fear the reproach of men or be terrified by their insults"

Romans 8:15 "you did not receive a spirit of fear, but of adoption"

Galatians has lots about this – 5:1 "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free"

- The pressure to conform to human traditions & expectations is at the heart of the letter
- The pressure to circumcise new believers was rooted in desire to impress people 6:12 "those who want to make a good impression outwardly.."
- Paul addresses the issue head on at start of letter 1:10 "am I trying to win the approval of men, or of God?"
- Peter was wrong to give in... Gals 2:11-13.. leading others astray, even Barnabas
- Tactic of evil one – 3:1 "who has bewitched you?"
- Robs them of joy 4:15 "what has happened to your joy?" (joy comes from obedience)
- Leads to divisions 5:14-15

Linked to insignificance – we're not secure in who we are in Christ

Linked to pride: we like to be admired & respected

Linked to unbelief – if we don't get approval of others, will God see us through?

Linked to moral cowardice – frightened of offending people

Key Truth: "Perfect love casts out fear" (1 John 4:18)