

Tearing Down Strongholds

by Gaye Moss

"Experiencing True Freedom and Victory in Christ"

Jesus told us that the Spirit of the Lord had anointed Him, "To preach the gospel to the poor ;. ..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.. II (Luke 4: 18 NKN). He came to bring us good news, to heal our broken hearts, to restore our spiritual sight, and to set us free!

Jesus also told us: "The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they [you] may have life, and that they [you] may have it more abundantly" (John 10:10 NKN).

[Abundantly, Strongs # 4053; perissos, (per-is-sos), - ...superabundant (in quantity) or superior (in quality),. ...excessive, exceeding abundantly above, ...very highly, beyond measure. ...]

From these verses, it is important for us to ask ourselves, "Am I really experiencing the abundant life that Jesus came to give me, and am I walking in the freedom and the liberty He desires for me ? II As we go through this lesson, we are going to be looking at hindrances Scripture calls strongholds (2 Cor. 10:4) that work to keep us from experiencing the freedom and abundant life Jesus desires for us.

Let's read Paul's instructions for tearing down strongholds in 2 Corinthians 10:3-5. He tells us: "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."

[Stronghold, Strongs # 3794, ochuroma, (okh-oo'-ro-mak), - ...(to fortify through the idea of holding safely); ...(Figuratively-argument) ...]

The kinds of strongholds Paul is referring to in this passage 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. These kinds of strongholds hold us in bondage and rob us of abundant life.

Some examples of strongholds the Lord has shown to me are: 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, controlling thoughts, lust, sexual impurity, all forms of addiction and compulsive behavior, etc.

Strongholds are not fleeting thoughts, but they are thoughts that gain strong ground in our minds. We want to learn to recognize these wrong thoughts and wrong attitudes so that we can tear them down. We want to line our thoughts up with God's Word and His will, allowing Him to redirect and reprogram our thoughts and our actions, so that we can walk in the freedom and the victory He desires for us.

Our goal is to develop Christlikeness. Our goal is to have the Word of God so firmly planted in our hearts, that we recognize every lie. We want to tear down every stronghold of wrong thoughts and wrong attitudes in order to build up the Stronghold of the Lord.

[Arguments, Strongs # 3053, Logismos, (log-is-mos') - computation, reasoning (conscience, conceit) ,-imagination, thoughts.]

The arguments Paul is referring to in 2 Corinthians 10, are thoughts and reasonings in our minds that set themselves up against the Word of God. These kinds of arguments are set up first, because we have formed opinions from our own experiences that are different from scriptural truths and second, because Satan is constantly sending us thoughts to try to steal the seed of the Word when it is planted in our hearts.

[Pretensions, Strongs # 5313, hupsoma, (hoop'-so-mah)," an elevated place or thing, ". barrier: ...high thing.]

When Paul tells us to "demolish every pretension that sets itself up against the

knowledge of God; " he is telling us that we are not to give any thought an elevated place over the Word of God.

Satan will tempt us to question God's Word, just as he tempted Eve in Genesis chapter three. His goal never changes—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. Satan's primary weapon is the lie. Our defense against him is the truth.

We want to learn to recognize every lie of the enemy, so that we can demolish those lies and bring our thoughts into obedience to the mind of Christ. As we learn to walk in the truth of the Word, we will experience true freedom and release.

Five Main 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 the people in our lives, from television, from movies, from music and from books, etc.

We want to learn to recognize the things we have received and the things we have been taught that do not line up with the Word of God. It is very important for us to follow the instructions found in Romans 12:2: "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world; but be transformed by the renewing of your mind..."

How do we renew our minds? We renew our minds through spending time in the Word, through sound godly counsel and teaching, and by listening to God's voice as He redirects our thoughts to line up with His Word.

If we feel like we are insignificant and have no real purpose in life, we are believing a lie, and our minds need to be renewed. If we feel like we are powerless and have no hope, our minds need to be renewed. If we feel we are unloved or unworthy, our minds need to be renewed to the Word of God.

Instead of listening to the world and to our own thoughts and reasonings, we need to listen to God! We need to yield ourselves totally and completely to the Holy Spirit!

2. Our Experiences

Scripture tells us that "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever" (Hebrews 13:8), but do we really believe it? Often, our experiences have left us believing something different from the promises of the Word.

We need to ask ourselves:

Do I really believe that "Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever"?

Am I limiting what I believe because of what I have experienced, and as a result, am I limiting God's power in my life?

2 Corinthians 5: 7 tells us, "We live by faith, not by sight." We never want to build our faith on what we see or how we feel. We want to build our faith on the Word of God!

3. The Acts of the Sinful Nature

Sin is an open door for strongholds. All kinds of wrong thoughts and wrong attitudes are formed through the acts of the sinful nature (Galatians 5: 19-21).

The key for overcoming sin is to stay constantly yielded to the Holy Spirit. We have no strength in ourselves, but the Spirit of God is powerful, and He will give us the grace we need to walk in obedience to God's Word and His will.

"Grace is the empowering presence of God giving us the ability to do what we need to do and to be what we need to be." II - James Ryle

4. Wrong Doctrines

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

Paul warns us in Colossians 2:8 saying: "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 are

walking in truth, we will see the fruit of "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control." (Gal. 5:21-23) being produced in our lives.

5. 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 religions. There may have been some counterfeit experiences that we have been involved in that we were 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 experience 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 Eph 2:14, "He himself {Jesus} is our peace..." and we are told in John 16:13, "When He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all truth... II Jesus also told us, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you... II (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.

Even though there are many methods and strategies that the world feels will offer help for the struggles and bondage in our life, there is only one way that will bring true freedom and true release. God's way is the only way that will work.

We want to learn to recognize every lie and every trap of the enemy, so that we can walk in the freedom and victory Jesus came to give us. He told us in John 8:31-32: "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

20 Biblical 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 Cor. 10:4

1. Ask God for His help in identifying the strongholds in your life

We need to recognize the strongholds before we can tear them down. Jesus told us in

John 16: 13, "When...the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all truth".As we seek the Lord, He will be faithful to help us identify every stronghold.

2. Make a quality decision to tear down every stronghold

Once we recognize a stronghold, we want to determine in our hearts that we are going to tear it down. 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." God longs to see us walking in freedom and victory. He wants us to recognize every lie, and then choose the truth.

3. Repent

Repentance is the door to freedom. With every stronghold, there is a lie of the enemy. We want to ask God to forgive us for believing and accepting the lie. We also want to ask God's forgiveness for any unconfessed sin, and we want to renounce all involvement in counterfeit spiritual activities. Proverbs 28: 13 tells us, "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."

Just as Daniel prayed prayers of repentance for the sins of his people, when they were living in captivity in Babylon(Daniel 9: 1-19), we can intercede on behalf of our families to see family strongholds torn down.

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. Thank God for the covering and protection of the blood of Jesus

In Exodus chapter 12 the Lord instructed the Israelites to take hyssop and apply the

blood of the Passover lamb to the doorframes to their homes for protection from the plague. Hyssop is symbolic of faith. It is by faith through repentance and confession that we apply the blood of Jesus to our lives today.

We read in Revelation 12: 11 that the believers overcame the accuser of the brethren "by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony." We overcome him in the same way.

6. *Submit yourself to God and resist the devil*

James 4:7 tells us: "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you"(KJV). Obedient submission brings tremendous victories to our lives. It is so important for us to stay submitted to God. When we are submitted to Jesus, we walk in His authority.

7. *Ask God for wisdom and listen carefully to what He says*

We need to find out God's plan. His plan is the only one that will work. James 1 :5 tells us, "if any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault..."

8. *Make daily deposits of God's Word in your heart*

Find Scripture promises that will build your faith in the area of your need. Romans 10: 17 tells us, "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (NKN).Romans 12:2 tells us, "...be transformed by the renewing of your mind..." It is so important for us to spend lots of 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. [Meditate, strong's # 1897, hagah, (haw-gaw) - to murmur ...to ponder,. --imagine, mutter, roar, sore, speak, study, talk, utter.]

"When we become consumed with what He said; it will become effortless to do what he says." -Creflo Dollar

9. *"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.

We want to think excellent and praiseworthy thoughts (Phil 4:8).

10. 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.

11. Cast all your cares on the Lord

1 Pet 5: 7 instructs us, "Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you."

12. Yield yourself to God

Romans 6: 13 instructs us to offer ourselves to God as "instruments of righteousness." We want to yield our feelings, our thoughts, our attitudes and our wills to God. The reigning power of Jesus will take over when we are fully yielded to Him.

["Lord; I yield myself totally to You. Take complete control. Do everything in me You need to do, so that I can be everything You want me to be."]

13. Spend time daily praising and worshiping God

Psalms 8:2 says, "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 (2 Chronicles chapter 20).

Through praise and worship, we draw near to God and He draws near to us. Incredible victories can be won through praise and worship.

14. Put on the full armor of God (Eph 6:10-18)

Eph. 6: 10-11 tells us: "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 spending

time in prayer and through spending time in the Word.

15. 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 request to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

We are promised in Matthew 18: 19-20: "If two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them. "

16. Make sure you are walking by faith and not by sight

2 Corinthians 5:7 says, "We live by faith, not by sight." We want to keep our eyes on God's Word and His promises and not on what we see or how we feel.

17. Cloth yourself in humility

James 4:6, 10: "...God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble...Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up."

[True humility --nothing to fear, nothing to prove, nothing to lose and nothing to hide.
-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. For years, I did not realize that mountains could be problems. When I finally understood that I could speak to a problem in the powerful name of Jesus, I decided that I would begin speaking to the mountains in my life.

From the time my daughter, Mindy, was a little girl, she struggled with feeling homesick everytime she was away from home. Even in her early 20's, she found that she was still struggling with the same problem. One day, it finally dawned on me that we should

speak to the mountain of homesickness and command it to go from her.

On her next out-of-town trip, when she called for prayer, I spoke to homesickness and told it to go from her in Jesus' name. She noticed a change right away, and she was able to enjoy the rest of her trip. Since that time, she has not struggled with feelings of homesickness.

19. Always remember, there is power in the name of Jesus

Jesus gave us an incredible promise in John 14:12-14, when he said: "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!

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