

## Strongholds

This may be a completely new topic for some. To others it may be familiar ground.

My prayer is that God will grant you wisdom as you seek to be transformed into the image of His Son, and in that glorious process of gaining freedom, you will become all that He has created you to be. That you will become pure, just as He is pure...

*“Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”*

*2Corinthians 3:17-18*

*“Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when He appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.”*

*1John 3:2-3*

*“Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.”*

*Ephesians 5:25-27*

Jesus is coming back for a bride that is \_\_\_\_\_, without a wrinkle or blemish. These “wrinkles and blemishes” are \_\_\_\_\_. Strongholds are areas of bondage that set themselves up in humans. A stronghold is just that. It is anything that has a “strong hold” on our life. A stronghold is \_\_\_\_\_. And it is \_\_\_\_\_. Strongholds are not a part of God’s plan for our lives, however most Christians are plagued with this infirmity.

We have covered the fact that when we ask Jesus Christ to be our personal savior, and repent of our sin, our spirit is born again. Jesus is now living inside the spirit. When this miracle takes place, our spirit has been renewed. (John 3:3)

Once a person is born again, he/she can never be \_\_\_\_\_ by satan. Once the enemy knows he can never have our spirit and thus take us to hell, he moves on to his next objective.

*“The thief comes to steal, kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.” John 10:10*

Satan’s main purpose is to keep us bound up in \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, so that he can continue to torment us in the future! Christ’s plan for our life is for us to live life abundantly, so that we will be a shining example of the Bride of Christ and draw others to His marvelous love.

## The difference between possession and strongholds

These are two terms that are often confused concerning the influence of satan and the workings of his demon forces in our lives. Some people think that possession and strongholds (also referred to as bondage) are the same thing, but such is not the case. We must understand that these two words actually refer to, and occur in, two separate parts of our being. The \_\_\_\_\_ and the \_\_\_\_\_.

### Possession

Our spirits are either dead or alive. If we have accepted Christ, our spirits are alive. Someone who has not made this crucial decision has a dead spirit. That part of their being is either filled with “self”; or if they have so chosen, with “satan.” The definition of possession is \_\_\_\_\_.

**A Christian *cannot* be demon possessed by satan because Jesus *possesses* the believer’s spirit! Hallelujah!**

### Strongholds

In contrast to possession, a stronghold is determined by \_\_\_\_\_. Satan *does* have access to that area of our being. He knows that he cannot possess a born again Christian, so he will seek to manipulate us through the footholds we have allowed into our soul. These are areas where we have “been taken captive to do his (satan’s) will.” Some obvious examples of demonic strongholds are: fear, lust, anger, depression, addiction, rejection, sexual perversion, unforgiveness and bitterness. But some examples of strongholds that are harder for us to identify and therefore easier for the enemy to use are things like: Vanity, greed, pride, self-love, ambition and even imagination, as with fantasy. These are all lodged in the area of your soul, not your spirit. This becomes clear if we pause to consider how all of these involve the mind (how we think), the will (how we act), and the emotions (how we feel).

It is so important that we understand that rebirth happens in our spirit. Our soul and body are not reborn. The experience of salvation, or being born again, and the freeing of our soul from demonic strongholds are two separate and distinct matters. The Bible makes this distinction by referring to the *rebirth* of the spirit but the *restoration* of the soul. The first occurs \_\_\_\_\_ when we receive Jesus. The second is a \_\_\_\_\_ that occurs over time... But only if we so choose.

*“In a large house there are articles not only of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay; some are for noble purposes and some for ignoble. If a man **cleanses himself** from the latter, he will be an instrument for noble purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work.” 2 Timothy 2:20-21*

Every Christian must come to the place in their own life where they decide to live life abundantly. We are given the choice to be “\_\_\_\_\_” or “\_\_\_\_\_.”

We can choose to live a life of \_\_\_\_\_ - full of joy, peace and righteousness. Or we can choose to live a life of \_\_\_\_\_... full of addictions, past hurts, and failures.

For some, just the thought of demonic activity in our lives is hard to believe, much less receive. However, Christians would do well to realize that we are at war with an unseen enemy. This enemy desires nothing but to “steal, kill, and destroy” everything that we hold dear.

*“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*

*“Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.” 1Peter 5:8-9.*

Too often we are not taught these fundamental principles, even though the Word is full of examples of not only unbelievers harassed by demons, but believers as well. One example of a believer being manipulated by a demonic spirit is Simon in the 8<sup>th</sup> chapter of Acts. Simon was a sorcerer who performed magic. The Bible says “...all the people, both high and low, gave him their attention and exclaimed,” *This man is the divine power known as the Great Power,*” *They followed him because he had amazed them for a long time with his magic. But when they believed Phillip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Simon himself believed and was baptized.*” Later Peter rebukes Simon sharply and says, “*For I see that you are full of bitterness and captive to sin.*” Even though Simon believed in Christ and was baptized, he still had demonic strongholds.

## **How do strongholds occur?**

We must educate ourselves on how demonic forces gain access to our souls and are allowed to torment us. The Bible is clear on this subject. When we give into temptation and \_\_\_\_\_, we unleash the destructive forces of darkness and open our souls up to demonic torment. Not only do we become a slave to that sin but that sin will eventually bring forth death. Jesus said;

*“ I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin.” John 8:34*

*“But each one is tempted when he is dragged away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.” James 1:14-15*

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Satan is the one behind the temptation of mankind. Scripture is full of examples of satan tempting man. Eve in the Garden of Eden, Judas, the disciple who betrayed Jesus, and Jesus Himself in the wilderness are just three such examples.

Satan is a created being, and thus not omnipresent like God. Since he cannot be everywhere at once, he must rely on the help of the one-third of angels that also rebelled in heaven and were thrown to the earth. Together, satan and his demons make up the kingdom of darkness. Their purpose is to tempt man to sin so that they can unleash satan's plans of destruction upon God's beloved creation.

**Thus, whenever there is temptation to sin, we can conclude that there is a spirit of evil behind that temptation, trying to get us to give into that sin. If they can get us to fall to the temptation, they have a legal right to gain a foothold in our soul.**

*"...and do not give the devil a foothold." Ephesians 4:27*

It is obvious from this scripture that we *can* give the devil a foothold. This passage is referring to anger. If we sin in our anger, then we give the devil a foothold. This is just one example of how sin opens that door. There are many doors that the enemy uses to gain footholds into our soul. Those footholds, if not confessed, repented of, and renounced, will eventually become strongholds. Those strongholds, if left alone will completely bind us with unseen spiritual chains and ultimately bring destruction into our lives...

*"The evil deeds of a wicked man ensnare him; the cords of his sin hold him fast."  
Proverbs 5:22*

### **The cords of a man's sin hold him fast**

When we sin, the devil gains that foothold. He can actually take us captive. This scripture states that "*the cords of his sin hold him fast.*" Satan actually holds our souls in bondage! We are held fast in two separate ways. If a person has a stronghold in an area of their life, one of two things will happen. One, they will \_\_\_\_\_ again and again. Or two, they will be \_\_\_\_\_ over a past sin... both are prisons.

#### **1) Falling to the same sin again and again**

When there is a stronghold in an area, it's natural for us to repent in that area and mean it. We *want* to turn away from that sin. But when we still commit the sin again and again and again... It is a stronghold.

#### **2) Plagued by guilt and condemnation**

Another way we are held captive is by not being able to get over a past sin. We continually feel regret and guilt, condemnation and shame. This is telling us the enemy has a stronghold in that area.