

Theme: Spiritual strongholds are entrenched habits of thought, emotions, speech, and actions Satan uses to keep us from experiencing freedom in Christ.

I. Intro - Salah al Din Citadel in Cairo

- A. Pic of me at the Citadel; on high point of old Cairo
- B. Place of strength to withstand assault; hard to destroy
- C. Could command surrounding areas
- D. Could be used as prisons too; hard to break in or out
- E. What are spiritual strongholds in spiritual warfare?
- F. Where will the battle rage in our spiritual war?

II. Understanding Spiritual Strongholds

- A. Paul is talking about spiritual 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. Paul is speaking of spiritual warfare - not fleshly
 - 2. He says there are spiritual strongholds which must be demolished
- B. Defining spiritual strongholds
Spiritual strongholds are entrenched habits of thought, emotions, speech, and actions Satan uses to keep us from experiencing freedom in Christ
 - 1. Spiritual strongholds are deep entrenchments - well worn paths that are so familiar we often are unaware of their presence; many start in childhood
 - 2. Spiritual strongholds affect every part of us - thoughts, emotions, words, and actions

- 3. Spiritual strongholds are used by Satan to keep us in bondage rather than experiencing liberty in Christ
- 4. Strongholds are well worn ways we sinfully respond to life, rather than turning to God for deliverance

III. How Spiritual Strongholds Are Built & Maintained

- A. Spiritual strongholds are established by thought patterns
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 10:5
 - 1. Thought - common word for mental reflections
 - 2. Arguments - reasonings; reflections; a bit deeper
 - 3. It is possible for thought processes to become so entrenched that they are second nature - we are no longer even aware of the thought pattern it seems so natural
 - 4. A stronghold of thought makes any other way of thinking seem unimaginable and impossible
 - 5. These thoughts are often negative, full of doubt, and define the way we view ourselves and others
 - 6. Example: hyper criticism as a child leads to thoughts of never being good enough; same with fear; racism
 - 7. Unless our thought life is renewed we will never escape the pattern of this world and the stronghold of the enemy
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. Romans 12:2

8. To do this we must take every thought captive to make it obedient to Christ and His truth
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 10:5

9. Spiritual warfare is won in the hand to hand combat of the thought life; there is no victory without this

B. Spiritual strongholds become entrenched emotional patterns

What I feared has come upon me; what I dreaded has happened to me. ²⁶ I have no peace, no quietness; I have no rest, but only turmoil.” Job 3:25–26

1. Job was very righteous, but had deep seated fears
2. It is not that these fears gave Satan special access - but when events happened Satan used the strongholds of fear to erode Job’s trust in God
3. An emotional stronghold is based on thought strongholds and often on past experiences
4. These strongholds produce emotions so deep that I begin to think they are the real me, rather than an improper emotional response based on past hurts and sinful thought patterns.
5. When embraced these emotional strongholds define the way we view ourselves, others and the world around us
6. Example: past sinful actions against us lead to emotions of distrust and fear, and make deep relationships difficult if not impossible

C. Spiritual strongholds produce sinful verbal patterns

A fool’s lips bring him strife, and his mouth invites a beating. ⁷ A fool’s mouth is his undoing, and his lips are a snare to his soul. Proverbs 18:6–7

The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit. Proverbs 18:21

1. Our words can produce life and health for us and others, or they can produce death and sickness for us and those around us
2. It is not that words have some magical power to create reality, but that sink deep into us and others and can build or destroy Satan’s strongholds - or God’s strongholds in us!
3. Wrong thought patterns that become strongholds produce entrenched emotions that lead to wrong words, which create devastation in those who hear them
4. Example: a parent or spouse who speaks harsh, unloving, critical words will crush the spirit of their spouse or child
5. Example: a spouse or parent who speaks words of gratitude, love, and faith will build up their spouse or child in the ways and words of God
6. Take great care with your words - you will eat the fruit of them!

D. Spiritual strongholds produce sinful activity patterns

And we will be ready to punish every act of disobedience, once your obedience is complete. 2 Corinthians 10:6

1. This is the end of the process - acts of disobedience

2. Strongholds are used by Satan to produce ungodly actions and patterns of behavior which are destructive to the person committing them and to those around them
3. Wrong thought patterns that become strongholds produce entrenched emotions that lead to wrong words and behaviors which seem utterly irresistible
4. Ungodly habits are so enslaving because they are the end of a string of strongholds - from thoughts, to emotions, to words, to actions
 For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, ²² greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. Mark 7:21–22
 - a. This is why Jesus always drove to the heart rather than just external actions
 - b. It is impossible to change external behavior without breaking down the strongholds producing it
5. Example: a serial adulterer has strongholds of lust in their thoughts, producing evil desires, which lead to wrong words and finally to the adulterers bed
6. Example: we think bad thoughts about someone until it produces bad emotions toward them, which lead to ungodly speech and finally to evil actions
7. We must build walls against the actions, but there is no wall high enough to withstand strongholds of thoughts, emotions, and words

IV. Applying the Word

A. What strongholds exist in me?

1. All of us face temptation & spiritual attack

2. Strongholds are revealed in my response to temptation and attack
3. Do I know sinful patterns of thoughts, emotions, words and behaviors in my life?
4. Do I know the underlying stronghold prompting my actions? (Fear, pride, anger, rejection, etc.)
5. Am I willing to do the hand to hand combat necessary to see the stronghold demolished?
6. Am I willing to walk with others as we each battle strongholds - or would I prefer to run away?

B. The Lord is my stronghold!

1. Ultimately we address this by the Gospel!
2. Only the Lord should be our Stronghold - and through Christ He is!
 The Lord is a refuge for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble. Psalms 9:9

The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge. He is my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. Psalms 18:2

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? Psalms 27:1

The salvation of the righteous comes from the Lord; he is their stronghold in time of trouble. Psalms 37:39

3. Our great need is to turn from our false strongholds and to find freedom in Christ Our Stronghold!

4. God calls to us to look to Him, and to stand against our false strongholds that are really prisons
5. He calls to us today to turn to Him for safety and deliverance - run to Him!

C. The Table of Deliverance

The Battleground of Spiritual Warfare: Strongholds

2 Corinthians 10:3-5

August 6, 2017

Communion

Psalm 144:1-2

Teaching keywords: spiritual warfare; Satan and demons; fear; temptation

May the Lord train your hands for war, your fingers for battle. May your loving God be your fortress, your stronghold, and your deliverer, your shield in Whom you find refuge until He subdues your enemies under you through Jesus Christ! Psalm 144:1-2 paraphrase

For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. ⁴ The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. ⁵ 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. ⁶ And we will be ready to punish every act of disobedience, once your obedience is complete. 2 Corinthians 10:3-6