

PULLING DOWN STRONGHOLDS, Part I

Salvation is the first stage of God's plan for our lives, which is to conform us in character and power to the image of Jesus Christ. If we fail to see our relationship to God as such, we will allow too many areas within us to remain unchanged. Pulling down strongholds is the demolition and removal of these old ways of thinking so that the actual presence of Jesus Christ can be manifested through us.

WHAT IS A STRONGHOLD?

"For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the [pulling down of strongholds]" (2 Cor. 10:3-5).

All successful healing must begin by first removing the structures which defends the enemy. In speaking of spiritual warfare, the apostle Paul enlists the word "stronghold" (KJV) to define the spiritual fortresses wherein Satan and his legions hide and are protected. These fortresses exist in the *thought-patterns* and *ideas* that govern individuals and churches, as well as communities and nations. Before victory can be claimed, these strongholds must be pulled down and Satan's armor removed. Then the mighty weapons of the Word and the Spirit can effectively plunder Satan's house.

What is the biblical meaning of this word, "stronghold"? In the Old Testament, a stronghold was a fortified dwelling used as a means of protection from an enemy. We find that David hid from King Saul in wilderness strongholds at Horesh (1 Sam. 23:14, 19). These were physical structures, usually caves high on a mountainside, and were very difficult to assault. It was with this imagery in mind that the inspired writers of the Bible adapted the word "stronghold" to define powerful, vigorously protected spiritual realities.

A stronghold can be a source of protection for us from the devil, as is the case when the Lord becomes our stronghold (Ps. 18:2). Or conversely, a stronghold can be a source of defense for the devil, where demonic or sinful activity is actually defended within us by our sympathetic thoughts toward evil. The strongholds we are going to expose first are those wrong attitudes that protect and defend the old

self-life, which very often become the "fortified dwellings" of demonic oppression in a person's life.

The apostle Paul defines a stronghold as "speculations, [a] lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God" (2 Cor. 10:5). A demonic stronghold is any type of thinking that exalts itself above the knowledge of God, thereby giving the devil a secure place of influence in an individual's thought-life.

In most cases, we are not talking about "spirit-possession." This author does not believe that a Christian can be possessed, for when a person is possessed" by a demon, that demon fills their spirit the way the Holy Spirit fills the spirit of a Christian.

However, Christians can be *oppressed* by demons, which can occupy unregenerated thought-systems, especially if those thoughts are defended by self-deception or false doctrines! The thought, "I cannot have a demon because I am a Christian," is simply untrue. A demon cannot have you in an eternal, possessive sense, but you *can have a demon* if you refuse to repent of your sympathetic thoughts toward evil. Your rebellion toward God provides a place for the devil in your life.

A number of Christians are tormented by various fears [these fears become a stronghold for the enemy]. They have been counseled and prayed over but to little avail. They needed more than prayer, they needed deliverance. But deliverance will probably be far from them until the *spirit of fear* is confronted and bound, and the stronghold of fear cast down.

Many believers have been taught that, because they have the Holy Spirit, they cannot be deceived. This also is untrue. One reason the Spirit of Truth was sent was because we so easily fall into self-deception. In fact, the very *thought* that a Christian cannot be deceived is itself a deception! Once that particular lie permeates a believer's mind, his ideas and opinions crystallize and remain in whatever state of spiritual immaturity he happens to be. All manner of spirits will attack the soul knowing they are protected by the armor of that person's own thoughts and doctrines!

It is quite difficult to break the power of religious self-deception, for the very nature of "faith" is to give no room for doubt. Once a person is deceived, he does not recognize that he is deceived, because

he has been deceived! For all that we think we know, we must know this as well: we can be wrong. If we refuse to accept this truth, how will we ever be corrected from our errors?

Any area of our heart or mind that is not surrendered to Jesus Christ is an area vulnerable to satanic attack. And it is here, uniquely in the uncrucified thought-life of the believer's mind, that the pulling down of strongholds is of vital importance. For this reason, we must attain what the Scriptures call "humility of mind" before real deliverance is possible. When we discover rebellion toward God within us, we must not defend or excuse ourselves. Rather, we must humble our hearts and repent, exercising our faith in God to change us.

You see, Satan feeds upon sin. Wherever there is a habit of sin in a believer's life, expect to find demonic activity in that area. The sin-habit often becomes the dwelling place for a spirit that is robbing a believer of power and joy, and that habitation (or habit) is a stronghold.

You may not agree with the idea that evil spirits can frequent and occupy attitudes in a believer's life, but you must certainly agree that each of us has a carnal mind which is a source of vain imaginations and thoughts that exalt themselves above God (2 Cor. 10:3-5). We deal with the devil by dealing with the carnal thought systems, the strongholds, that protect the enemy.

There were no strongholds, no wrong attitudes, no faulty thinking processes in Christ's mind. Just before Jesus went to His death, He remarked, "the ruler of the world is coming, and he has nothing in Me" (John 14:30). Satan had nothing *in* Jesus. We also want to be able to say that Satan has no secret area inside us, no "temptation-buzzer" he can push that will open the door of our soul toward evil. When the strongholds of our minds are toppled, though we may still occasionally fall into sin, we will walk in great victory. And we will be instrumental in helping others in their deliverance as well.

**Continued on Volume 4, Number 1002
(Get a copy on your next visit)**

Maintaining Your Healing

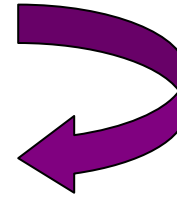
“Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you”. --- James 4:7

“Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord”. --- Rom 6:11

- **Submit to God** --- Embrace defeat in your flesh. When old behaviors arise, immediately turn your attention to God and know that you can do all things through Christ who strengthens you. Know that He shows you your problems because He loves you. (*Phil. 4:13, Heb. 12:6*)
- **Resist the devil** --- Take authority over the enemy. Renounce, rebuke, or reject the offending thoughts or spirits in Jesus' name. Pronounce that these sins are covered in the blood of Christ and no longer have power over you. (*Luke 10:19, 2 Cor. 10:4-5, Heb. 9:13-14, 1 Cor. 6:2*)
- **Reckon it as dead** --- Know the structures were crucified with Christ, and rejoice that by His stripes you were healed in those areas. (*Ro. 6:11, Isa. 53:5, 2 Cor 5:17*)
- **Occupy the land** --- Claim who you are in Christ Jesus. Accept God's encouragement that He will complete the work in you. (*Gal. 3:26, Phil 1:6*)
- **Walk in His ways** --- Abide in His presence daily to strengthen your spirit; have regular quiet time with God and ask Him to show you attacks before they come. (*John 10:27, John 15:4-5*)
- **Share your testimony** of healing with others and ask them to hold you accountable if you return to your old ways. (*Rev 12:11, Prov. 13:1, Prov. 17:10, Prov. 27:6*)
- **Avoid destructive life styles** and bad influences. (*2 Tim. 2:23-26*)
- **Talk it out with your brethren.** Don't let it build up. (*James 5:16, 1 John 1:9*)
- **Accept responsibility.** Stop blaming others. (*Gen. 3:11-12*)

grow a vision

serve with Oaks



God continues to grow our ministry through the obedience and faithfulness of those we serve. There are a number of ways you might participate in Oaks of Righteousness --- ultimately the Body of Christ. Here are a few:

- ♦ **Join our prayer ministry team** --- be an intercessor. Call or email Lisa Snowden; (678) 493-5095, elissa96@msn.com and share with her where your heart is leading you.
- ♦ **Register for one our schools or seminars** --- Break-through to Joy, Elijah House Basic 1, Theophostic, Restoration for Women - Rising above a Victim's Life, Restoration for Men - Freedom Over Ungodly Passion. visit our web site at www.oaksofrighteousness.org
- ♦ **Become part of Oak's volunteer staff** --- contact Richard or Virginia at 770-428-8157 or email RR at oaks12@bellsouth.net, VR at oaks7@bellsouth.net.
- ♦ **Serve through the ministry of helps** --- share your gifts and talents in a tangible way.
- ♦ **Become a financial partner** --- offer \$25, \$50, or \$100 a month as an offering to the Lord.



Food for Thought

volume 4, number 1001

excerpts and articles from various sources that will help you grow spiritually



Visit our web site: www.oaksofrighteousness.org

Email: oaks7@bellsouth.net

Fax: 678-797-1870

Phone: 770-428-8157