Week One

 **Strongholds**

2 Corinthians 10:4-5

A stronghold is an improper thinking pattern that is consistent and recurring, in the mind, that produce behavior that exalt itself against the knowledge of God. A stronghold is actually an attack on the mind, a fortress, lodged in the mind of a believer as a result of ungodly practices or disobedience to the word of God. The mind is the arena where all spiritual warfare is fought. It is the mind that sends commands to the members of the body to act in obedience or contrary to God’s word.

A stronghold is being in spiritual bondage to sin. Jesus said, “Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin (John 8:34).” Sin forms a chain that only Jesus Christ can break. The believer has two capacities. The believer can resist sin or commit sin. The unsaved has only one capacity which is to commit sin. When a believer enters into practices such as fornication, adultery, lying, homosexuality, drunkenness, unforgiveness, excessive anger, gossiping, pornography, just to name a few, he gives the devil a foothold in his life.

Such practices give the devil license to establish strongholds in the mind of the believer. A stronghold is a mindset, habit of mind formed by previous experiences. The believer must understand that he is not in bondage to sin.

Romans 8:1-4, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.

For the Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the Law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.

That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit.”

A believer can be guilty of disobeying God, but he is not in bondage to sin. A believer may have a compassion to steal, and he may even carry out a theft, but he will repent. What a believer cannot do is self-identify as a thief, enjoy being a thief, and feel no remorse. The unbeliever can commit such crimes and feel no remorse. The believer walk after the spirt and the unbeliever walks after the flesh. When a believer is born again his spirit becomes saved but he still has the fallen and corrupt nature of the flesh.

The one that is fed the most will have the stronger personality in the believer’s life, the mind of the spirit or the mindset of the flesh. For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the spirit the things of the spirit (Romans 8:5). There is no doubt that demons oppress and tempt believers but there is no evidence to suggest that we are bound by demons or rendered helpless in spiritual warfare. Here is the real danger: that we become obsessed with spiritual bondage and with our own inner workings to the point that sin becomes our focus (stronghold) rather than Christ.

In this chapter I do not intend to deal with demon possession, but rather demon obsession and influence. Strongholds are the obsessive habit forming practices that have been attached to our minds as a result of allowing evil influences into our lives. Influences and obsession can enter our lives through gates that lead to our souls. A gate is an entrance and a exit point. The Bible teaches that Christians are not to give place to the devil (Ephesians 4:27).

The enemy can come into the lives of believers involuntarily through ignorance as well as by willful disobedience to God’s word. The Bible teaches in 2 Corinthians 2:11 “Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices. In order to keep the enemy from getting an advantage one must know truth and abide in truth.” Torment and accusations are consequences that accompany strongholds.

Even when one has repented and has been delivered from the obsession, influence, practices, the devil will attempt to torment the mind with his lies and accusations. The objective of his torment is to have the believer return to evil practices and or to denounce our God. The Bible says that he is the accuser of the brethren (Romans 12:10.)

It is important to understand the strategy of the enemy. He will attack you where you have been weak and vulnerable in the past. Whatever sin, improper language, behavior, misconduct, or character that you have allowed in the past-this is the ammunition the enemy will use to attack your mind. Unlike Jesus we have not lived innocent and pure lives.

In John 14:30 Reads: “Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.”

Jesus Christ was tempted yet without sin. He never committed a crime against God. Neither did he have a corrupt nature. The devil had nothing in him, and nothing that he could accuse him of. He had no gates open to his soul whereby the enemy could influence evil in his life. There are three gates that I want to discuss, that I believe believers must chose to prevent or be delivered from strongholds:

**The Eye Gate**

Matthew 6:22-23, “The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.

But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!”

The eye is the lamp of the body. The eyes act as a camera. When they are allowed to view things that are not pure and unclean, they take pictures of them with the film of the mind. The film is deposited into the laboratory of the soul, and once developed, in the soul, it becomes a stronghold. Viewing ungodly things will add fuel to our already corrupt nature.

When we violate God’s word we give bullets to the enemy to shoot at our minds. Images will appear in the mind and flashes of the unclean things that was viewed. Intrusive and hostile thoughts are played in the mind. The eye operates similar to a computer. If you visit bad websites on a computer, and think it harmless, you will be in for the shock of your life. You may visit the sites once or twice without knowledge that what you are viewing is being attached to the mainframe of your computer.

The website will not only corrupt the computer, but will take over the computer and unwanted pop-ups will be habitually displaying the ungodly websites visited. This is exactly what happens when the eye is allowed to view pornography and other ungodly sites. The viewing will be attached to the mind and ultimately the soul will emulate what has been deposited and allowed to develop in the soul. If you put it in a can and put a lid on it, and allow it to set several weeks without being emptied an obnoxious odor will disclose what is in the can.

Our eyes can be used to see that which is beneficial or harmful, and the things we see and perceive affect our whole being. If we perceive goodness that will radiate outward from within our hearts and minds. But if we allow our eyes to linger on evil, we will be affected by darkness that will emanate from within and corrupt us, and those who are around us.

**The Ear Gate**

Be not deceived: Evil communications corrupt good manners.

Our ears are tape recorders that transmit everything that’s heard into the mind, laboratory of the soul, heart, and into our spirit. Whether good or bad communication will have an affect on the life of a believer. Strongholds can be developed in the life of believers through listening to satanic music, ungodly entertainment, media, and people who speak under the inspiration of the spirit of disobedience. Our ears are access to our mind, soul, and spirit. Whatever is deposited into them will ultimately show itself in our lives, whether good or bad.

The enemy’s strategy in the 21st century is to use music, entertainment, and media to corrupt and enslave God’s people. The Bible teaches to give no place to the devil (Eph. 4:27). Believers are children of the Light. The devil will transform himself as an angel of Light to deceive God’s people (2 Corinthians 11:41). The enemy works undercover, in the light. What sounds like God, may not be God’s word. When people make comments, philosophical statements, or give revelation in my presence, I always ask them where can you show me scripture in the bible to support what you are saying. Some become irritated by my question, but I will not abandon my turf, I will not fight on the enemy’s ground, but will do battle with him on Holy Ground. No one has a right to give revelation without supporting scripture.

Do not receive a word that cannot be substantiated by the Bible. Whether prophecy, word of knowledge, word of wisdom, or word of discernment. If it does not point you to Jesus Christ, do not receive it. False doctrine that is received in the ears will poison the mind, soul, and the spirit. To receive unsound doctrine is to allow an evil seed to be planted in the mind that will grow and develop into a stronghold.

Ears like the eyes are gates that give access to the soul of man. Evil spirits can enter the life through music that is recorded in your spirit, through singing that is not theologically sound, and through listening to people who are negative, angry, treacherous, who sow seeds of discord, doubt, fault finders, and those who cannot communicate a word of faith to your spirit, resist. Believers must have a deafness to anything, person, music, entertainment, or media that communicates unsound doctrine.

**The Mouth Gate**

Proverbs 18:21, “Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it, will eat the fruit of it.”

James 3:8-8, “But the tongue can no man tame: it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.”

Mark 11:23, “For verily I say unto you, that whosoever shall say unto this mountain, be thou removed, and be thou casted into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith.”

The words that come forth from our mouth will frame our world. Our words have the power to create a positive atmosphere or a negative atmosphere. The greatest lesson of the power of the spoken word is given in Genesis 1:2-3. God took a negative formless, void, and dark earth that was lying in the water, breathe upon it, and spoke the words, “Let there be light:” and there was light. He turned a negative into a positive by his words.

Just as words can turn a negative into a positive so our words can turn a positive into a negative. Words are extremely important. The Bible says in Hebrews 11:3 “By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the thing which are seen were not made of things which are visible.” God created everything including man by his word.

The mouth is a communicator it speaks to the condition of our heart, mind, and soul. The Bible says; for out of the abundance of his heart, his mouth speaks. I have heard people say things that was ugly to people, and then say, oh, I didn’t mean that. Sure you did. The mouth can build up, the mouth can tear down. The mouth wound and the mouth kill. Proverbs 11:9 says with the mouth one destroyeth his neighbors. Gossip has assassinated many of good person, and has destroyed, like an atomic bomb many homes, friendships and even churches.

Our words are deadly, that which we speak about others and that which we speak about ourselves. I note that gossiping is a stronghold, and belongs in the same category of fornication, adultery, lies, homosexuality, drug addiction, gambling, and many other sins. In verse 23 of our previous listed scripture, Jesus emphasized the word says four times and ended it with we will have whatever we say. We can either have what we say (which enables us to be able to change our circumstance) or we can say what we have (which could make us victims to our circumstances.)

Words are powerful. Words unlock invisible prisons. When we give voice to the word of God, we can speak to the stronghold, revoke license we may have given evil spirits to operate in our minds, denounce the authority, repent, turn from the sin, and close the gates.

**Week Two -After Deliverance**

Matthew 12:44, “Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out: and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnish.

Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.”

To maintain healing and deliverance from the influence, obsession and invasion of the mind by evil spirits, it is essential to practice spiritual hygiene. When the mind is purge from improper thinking patterns, when a believer is renewed in the spirit of the mind, it is imperative that he or she does not return to sinful practices.

I remember having heard a story of a woman who was deaf and could not hear. It was said that she went to a revival and heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ. After the preaching the evangelist extended an invitation and the woman came to the altar. The evangelist prayed for her and she received her healing. The next night the woman came to the revival and she could not hear. She came to the altar, the evangelist prayed and she received her healing.

The woman left the revival and returned to her home. The next day the woman came back to the revival and she could not hear. The evangelist once again extended an invitation and the woman came to the altar. There was a preacher on the roster that spoke to the evangelist and said there is no need to continue to pray for this woman—he said after you pray for her she will return to her home and sleep in a defile bed, giving the devil legality and license to bound her up again.

In this case the woman was delivered from the strongman but not from the stronghold. A wrong pattern or system of thinking will allow the strongman to traffic in and out of the stronghold, and will become a habitual practice that is uncontrollable. The improper thinking pattern must be pulled down and demolished to guard against the return of the strongman.

In proverbs 26:2 it says that the curse does not come without a cause. A cause is person or thing that give rise to an action phenomenon or condition. The source-root-or origin is the cause. As mentioned earlier a stronghold is a system of thinking or mindset that is contrary to the word of God. Strongholds are built up walls and fortresses around belief systems and emotions to protect one from further pain.

I have been raped so I will make myself a prostitute. I have been molested so I will cover up the pain by molesting others. I feel like I have been hurt and rejected so I will continue to wear the band of un-forgiveness. There are women and men who say I have been hurt and abused by my mate so I will find solace in the same sex. Whether it’s emotional instability, sickness, fear, jealousy, unfaithfulness, pride or maybe you are financially depleted, there is a cause which is an improper system of thinking.

He that is healed by God must be ruled by God. One cannot be delivered and then return to the same thing that bounded him, that made him sick, that robbed him of his freedom, and violated his will. Practicing spiritual hygiene involves furnishing our mind, heart, and spirit with the things of the spirit. Our mind must be furnished with the word of God—transformed by the renewing of our mind.

Romans 12:1-2, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies as a living sacrifice holy, acceptable unto God; which is your reasonable service.

And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable and perfect will of God.”

The mind must be furnished with prayer. One must practice fervent prayer and the life an act of worship where intimacy with the Holy Spirit sustains their freedom the reoccurring advances or attacks by the enemy on their mind. The prayer life of a believer cannot be sporadic, lukewarm, missing in action, non-practiced and yet expect to walk in victory from past spiritual maladies.

The enemy will return to the house that was once bound with his influence, his obsession, to see if it is available. If he finds it without prayer, without the word, without worship, without service to God, without obedience to God—then he will make his entrance and reignite the stronghold in the mind again. The word reignite means—something that had disappeared starts to grow stronger again. The Bible tells us how to defeat the advance of the enemy-we are in a war so we must prepare for war.

Ephesians 6, “Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles (trickery) of the devil.

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having all to stand.

Spiritual strength and courage are needed for our spiritual warfare and suffering. Those who would stand in the evil day must put on the whole armor of God which prepares and bestows.”

The Christian armor is made to be worn: and there is no putting off our armor till we have done our warfare, and finished our course. The combat is not against human enemies, nor against our own corrupt nature only; we are at war with an un-seen enemy, who has many ways of beguiling unstable souls. The enemy assaults us with things that belongs to our souls. Whatever we have allowed him to use, he will to deface our hearts toward God.

The Bible says to submit ourselves unto God then resist the devil, and he will flee from you (James 4:7). If we give way, he will get ground. If we distance either our cause, or our God, or our armor, we give him advantage. The Bible gives us our armor and there is no one to defend those who turn back in there Christian warfare. The whole armor as listed in Ephesians 6:14-18 reads:

“Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;

And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:

Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;”