

Celebration Services (July 26 & 27, 2008)
"Learning to Fight Strongholds"

"Learning to Fight" (Pt. 5)

INTRO The Reality of Strongholds in the Lives of Christians

Jam 3:13-4:7 This passage puts the whole theater of warfare on the page:
– The Flesh's Cravings (Jam 3:14; 4:1-3)
– The World's Ideas (Jam 3:15; 4:4)
– The Devil's Strategic Presence (Jam 3:15; 4:7)

What Happens When All 3 of These Areas CONVERGE? → STRONGHOLDS

"Stronghold" (Oxford Dict) = a place that has been fortified against attack.

... There are places in your life that when YOU go to attack them, they offer strong and often successful resistance

THE CONSTRUCTION AND COMPONENTS OF A STRONGHOLD

“a lust in one man may receive many incidental improvements, heightenings, and strengthenings, which may give it life, power, and vigor exceedingly above what another lust has, or the same lust in another man. When a lust falls in with the natural constituents and temper, with suitable course of life, with occasions, or when Satan has a fit handle to it to manage it, as he has a thousand ways so to do, that lust grows violent and impetuous above others, or more than the same lust in another man; then the steams of it darken the mind so, that though a man knows the same things as formerly, yet they have no power nor influence on the will...” **John Owen**, “Overcoming Sin and Temptation”, p. 74

(1) LUST — the capacity of the human heart to CRAVE... DESIRE... LONG FOR... BECOME AMBITIOUS (Even violent for something)

Prov 4:23 “Watch over your heart with all diligence, For from it flow the springs of life.” NASU

Mark 7:20-23 And he said, “What comes out of a person is what defiles him. 21 For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, 22 coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. 23 All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.”

1 Tim 6:9-10 But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.

The Christian Must EVER be Managing What He WANTS!!

“ The simplest way to discover why a person does, says, thinks, or feels certain things is to ask, “What do you want? What desires made him do that? What yearning led her to say that? What longings animate me when I follow that train of thoughts and fantasy? What did they fear when they felt so anxious? ... Abraham Maslow sensibly described matters this way: “The original criterion of motivation and the one that is still used by all human beings— is the subjective one. I am motivated when I feel desire or want or yearning or wish or lack.” **David Powlison**, “Seeing with New Eyes”, p. 145

(2) NATURAL BENT (“natural constituents and temper”)

- **Genetic Disposition** — Factoring in PERSONAL UNIQUENESS
.... Yet There’s a UNIVERSAL APPEAL in God’s Commands & Enabling Spirit
- **Previous Familiarity or Environmental Influence** How you were raised; Bad Experiences

(3) SUITABLE COURSE OF LIFE— the patterns and practices of our daily living

Does your course of life offer too much TEMPTATION? Are you taking the “SCENIC ROUTE” that offers more pleasure but with More TEMPTATION?

- **Patterns of Being Unprepared to Fight**
Eph 6:10-13 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.
- **Patterns of Presenting Yourself to Temptation** ... Rom 6:16
- **Patterns of Giving in to Temptation**
 - Once your flesh has tasted of the pleasure of sin... you may have a more difficult time continuing to resist than you had imagined.
... **Remember the “Deceptiveness of Sin”**
 - **Repeated failure is Self-perpetuating and Corrosive to Faith for Change** ... the more you give in to temptation the more you are convinced you can’t change (Your faith is under attack by your poor choices)

“ Sow a thought, reap an action. Sow an action, reap a habit. Sow a habit, reap a character. Sow a character, reap a destiny.” Unknown

... **“PRACTICALS”** you cannot defeat sin and fight successfully with CONCEPTS ONLY? If you’re life is full of lofty doctrines and ideas but also unwise living patterns— YOU WILL LOSE!!

(4) SATAN'S INFLUENCE Satan is seeking fertile environmental conditions for investing his influence.

- **An Environment for "demonization"** — Is it possible for us to create an environment that is favorable for demonic success against us and gives "opportunities", "footholds", or "strategic advantage" to demonic activity?

" We should recognize that sinning (even by Christians) does give a foothold for some kind of demonic influence in our lives. Thus Paul could say, "Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil" (Eph 4:26). Wrongful anger apparently can give opportunity for the devil (or demons) to exert some kind of negative influence in our lives." **Wayne Grudem**, "Systematic Theology", p. 422

2 Cor 2:10-11 indeed what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, I did it for your sakes in the presence of Christ, 11 so that no advantage would be taken of us by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his schemes.

1 Peter 5:8-9 Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

... who is it that ends up making the list of "DEVOURABLE"?

1 Jn 5:18 "We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning, but he who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him.

" Where there is a pattern of persistent sin in the life of a Christian in one area or another, the primary responsibility for that sin rests with the individual Christian and his or her choices to continue that wrongful pattern. Nevertheless, there could possibly be some demonic influence contributing to and intensifying that sinful tendency. " **Wayne Grudem**, "Systematic Theology", p. 423

- **Biblical insights into "Demonization"** (Scriptures on Blinding, deceptive, enslaving, superhuman strength, resistant to attempts of freedom (woman in Lk)

2 Tim 2:25-26 God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, 26 and they may escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.

2 Cor 4:4 In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

Acts 26:18

Mk 5:1-15

Luke 13:10-16

THE DISRUPTION OF STRONGHOLDS INVOLVES:

1. **Repentance & Brokenness** – Willingness to do whatever God calls you to do; willingness to part with the pleasure and reward of sin in this area; willingness to not be lazy; willingness to not be deceptive
2. **Breaking the Influence of Demonization**
Acts 26:18 ... "delivering people from the power of Satan to God"
1Jn 3:8 ... Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil
Gospels ... Jesus confronting the demonic; the disciples call to cast out demons and to preach with authority
3. **Continuing to Fight the Battle in the Mind** — while demonic activity can be instantly interrupted, renewing the mind is NOT INSTANTANEOUS, it is a PROCESS that must be Consistent and Sustained
4. **Making Wise Choices about Your PROXIMITY to Temptation**
5. **Making Wise Choices to Cultivate PASSION for Christ**