

# Strongholds

## Key Verse

*Psalm 18:2 - The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.*

## Opening Question

What do you think of when you hear the word "stronghold"?

## Exploring the Bible

### I. A Good Stronghold

*Psalm 9:9 - The LORD is a stronghold for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble. (ESV)*

Question: In a time of trouble what does the Lord become?

Answer:

*Nahum 1:7 - The LORD is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; he knows those who take refuge in him. (ESV)*

Question: In the day of trouble what does the Lord become?

Answer:

### II. How Does a Stronghold Get Started?

*John 10:10 - The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.*

Question: What does the thief come to do?

Answer:

The Bible talks about a day of trouble. These are situations or events where a person or a group of people are putting you in a position of harm. That harm could be physical, emotional, spiritual, or a combination of all of the above. The people bringing this harm

could be unsaved people who are walking in their own sinfulness and darkness or it could be believers who are living out their own issues for which they have not dealt with at the cross. The devil comes to steal, kill, and destroy, so the enemy will try to bring these situations into our lives when we are children, young and vulnerable, and probably not knowing the Lord. When we face these days of trouble, we are going to look for a place of refuge, a stronghold where we can be safe from the trouble. At this point we have two choices. We can choose God as our stronghold, or we can choose something else. Let's look at these the verses below.

*Psalm 77:2 - In the day of my trouble I seek the Lord; in the night my hand is stretched out without wearying; my soul refuses to be comforted.*

Question: Who is this person seeking in their day of trouble?

Answer:

In this verse the author of this Psalm is facing a day of trouble and needs a place of refuge, a stronghold. He has made the choice for the Lord to be his stronghold so he refuses to look for any other source of refuge that will bring comfort because that source will be a false comfort.

*Proverbs 12:13 - An evil man is ensnared by the transgression of his lips, but the righteous escapes from trouble.*

Question: How is the evil man ensnared?

Answer:

The righteous escape trouble because the Lord is their stronghold and refuge. But the person who does not know the Lord creates his or her own source of refuge or stronghold. Many times that refuge is created by words: angry words, lying words, or manipulative words. The problem is that while this refuge might work temporarily it ends up ensnaring them. This is what we see as strongholds in our lives. They are defenses we have built up to protect us in a day of trouble but which have now become a snare and a source of darkness and destruction in our lives. These strongholds might still provide a sort of protection, but they have also given a place to the enemy to operate in our lives.

*Ephesians 4:25-27 - Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body. "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold. (NIV)*

Question: What are we not supposed to give to the devil?

Answer

Anytime we practice lying, deception, and anger as a way of life, a refuge, or a stronghold for the day of trouble, we give the devil an opportunity, a place to operate in our lives. The more we continue to use something other than God as our refuge the more the devil can establish his place of operation in our life. What was once a place of refuge for us has now become a stronghold, a protected place of operation for the devil in our life. The devil now brings darkness, deception, and destruction into your life.

### **III. How do we Identify Strongholds?**

*2 Corinthians 10:4-5 - For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ. (ESV)*

Question: What is raised up against the knowledge of God?

Answer:

Is there an area of your life where, every time you try to move forward in Christ, you run up against a "brick wall"? You can't move forward or get around this "brick wall" that confronts you and stops your progress. This is a stronghold. It is an area in your life where something has been raised up against the knowledge of God. It will oppose you when you try to draw closer to Christ. The enemy has a protected area in your life from which he can operate and stop your growth and progress in Christ.

*John 16:13 - When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.*

Question: What will the Holy Spirit guide us into?

Answer:

Many times we can't see the strongholds in our life because the enemy has produced blindness and deception in the area of the stronghold. Others can see it clearly, but you can't. The only way you can see and identify these strongholds is with the help of the Holy Spirit. He will be able to open your eyes to see the stronghold, show you the root of it, and give grace to bring you to the cross to deal with it.

#### **IV. Destroying the Stronghold**

The same verses that described the nature of a stronghold also tell us how to destroy them.

*2 Corinthians 10:4-5 - For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ. (ESV)*

Question: What does the divine power allow us to destroy?

Answer:

STRONGHOLDS TO BE ARE DESTROYED!! They are not tolerated, suppressed, or avoided. They are enemy fortresses in your life that the enemy has used to steal, kill, and destroy in your life. When an enemy fortress is taken, it is destroyed, torn down to the ground so that the enemy can't ever come back and have a safe place from which to operate. The stronghold can't be recycled and reused. Remember, it was the establishing of this false place of refuge in the first place that caused the problem. The stronghold can only be destroyed and replaced with God who is our true refuge and stronghold.

How are strongholds destroyed? The logic (arguments) are destroyed and the arrogance (lofty opinion) cast down. There is always a certain set of logical thoughts (arguments) that hold our mind captive and keep us under the power of the stronghold, and there is arrogance that this way of thinking and operating is better than the way of the truth in Jesus Christ.

*1 John 1:9 - If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (ESV)*

Question: What happens if we confess our sin?

Answer:

To confess our sin means to "agree with God." When I agree with God on something, it means I have already repented (changed my mind and seen something from God's perspective). This is how the arrogance of the stronghold is destroyed. I acknowledge that God's ways are higher and better than my way which has raised itself up and stopped me from knowing Christ in a deeper way.

Many times in order to bring destruction to this aspect of a stronghold, we will need to forgive the person or persons that brought about the day of trouble into our life and caused us to erect an ungodly stronghold of refuge. Without this forgiveness the stronghold will continue to stand in its arrogant defiance of the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and we cannot progress any further in our walk with the Lord.

*Romans 12:1-2 - I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. (ESV)*

Question: How are we to be transformed?

Answer:

Renewing the mind is a process by which we replace thought patterns from the world and from the devil. This is how the arguments are destroyed. We bring the truth of God's Word against the deceptive lies and arguments of the stronghold. As we receive, meditate on, and stand upon the truth of God's Word, those arguments which gave the stronghold strength are destroyed. What was a stronghold of the enemy is now a stronghold of righteousness because of the Word of God that has replaced the devil's arguments and lies.

## **Practical Exercise**

Is there an area of your life that you can readily recognize as a stronghold? If so, do you know the root of this stronghold? Are you willing to forgive, if necessary, and confess the sin that the Holy Spirit is showing you? You may find it hard or even feel like it is impossible to do this. You can ask the Lord to give you the grace and a willing heart to walk this out.

Are you willing to ask the Lord to show you the strongholds in your life? He will reveal them to you and give you the grace to face each one and through the power of the cross destroy them. But you must be willing to open your heart to the work of the Holy Spirit to reveal them to you.