**Think Again: Developing A Healthy Mind – Part 4**

**Strongholds - Principles, Practices and Power – Part 2**

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# **SERMON DESCRIPTION**

Principles, practices, and power, all play a critical role as it relates to spiritual freedom.

There is a clear difference between a stronghold and the strongman. The stronghold needs to be cast down but the strongman, which is a demonic presence, needs to be cast out.

# **SERMON QUESTIONS**

1. What do they need to know?
* God is providing mighty weapons for the pulling down of strongholds and spiritual authority for casting out demonic presence.
1. Why do they need to know it?
* It was for freedom that Christ set us free.
1. How should we apply it?
* Our ability to remain free is highly dependent on our spiritual practises.

# **CENTRAL TRUTH**

It was for freedom that Christ died and set us free. He has provided us with mighty weapons for the pulling down of strongholds which inhabit the mind. When circumstances escalate to a higher level, spiritual authority and power is required to cast out, what Jesus called, “the strongman”. The strongman is a demonic presence but thank God that Jesus Christ has greater authority, more power and powerful anointing to deal with every spiritual wickedness.

# **MAIN PASSAGE**

**2Corinthians 10:3-7**

3For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. 4For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, 5casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, 6and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.

**7**Do you look at things according to the outward appearance? If anyone is convinced in himself that he is Christ’s, let him again consider this in himself, that just as he *is* Christ’s, even so we *are* Christ’s.

**1Timothy 6:12**

Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

**Philippians 2:12**

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; …

# **MAIN POINTS**

# **Truth and Confrontation**

* In order for an argument to be destroyed and brought down it requires a counter argument—it requires the truth. There are times when we need to be confronted by the reality of the truth that is grounded in God’s word. Consider:
* The teachings of Jesus infuse the truth or the counter argument, He interjects a different/opposing argument in the scenario

* At times, our vision and perspective can become completely blurred and we require someone to come and clean our lens for us. For example, King David needed Nathan the prophet to confront him and to provide him with clear thinking and unblurred vision when it came to his sin with Bathsheba because he was in a state of deception. He did not even realize that he was in the wrong, but he had sinned against God and was completely caught up in his own behavior. He was blinded by his lust.
* David lacked clarity – he needed the prophetic ministry of Nathan to open his eyes and confront him. David lacked self-awareness and could not see himself for who he really was and what he had done. Therefore, God had to appeal to David’s sense of justice. In some ways God had to slap him in the face and trick him into doing the right thing and to the realization of what he had done.
* Although David’s relationship with God was not perfect at least it was intact and it mattered to David how he related to God. Therefore, when he came to his senses he repented.
* Paul is another example. Jesus had to confront him, blind him, and throw him off his high horse in order for truth and light to come into his life.

We condition ourselves to “win” the argument—this is human nature. If we are not careful, we will defend ourselves to a fault and to our very own detriment. Therefore, we require clarity, and we must ask the question: Is it me, or is everyone else at fault? It is interesting that there are certain matters everyone else sees about us, but we do not. Who is delusional? Everyone else or you? We need the grace of God and/or others to help us confront our own hearts and minds at times.

Truth provides:

* Perspective and accuracy
* The big picture
* Destroys false paradigms
* Causes an individual to let go of control and trust God
* ***When the truth moves from our head to our hearts, faith begins to engage, and the argument is removed.***

# **Self-Talk: Accurate Perspective That Is Based on The Truth**

* Everyone experiences self-talk, both negative and positive; however, it has been proven that most self-talk is negative. This is where the counter argument can be a powerful weapon in destroying strongholds. Christ followers must possess the ability to speak to their own mind and thoughts and to subjugate those that are negative and adversarial to Christ. No one can do this for you, it is a discipline that must be developed, and it is a muscle that must be strengthened. Unfortunately, most self-talk is typically negative, debasing, and rooted in fear and insecurity.
* You can have a good heart but a distorted mind, your intentions might be correct but because of the thoughts in your mind, your words, and your actions, can come out completely wrong. Therefore, people can appear successful but have horrible lives.
* Fallback excuses – to save face or explain actions and behaviours people have excuses and things that they fall back on. Consider some things people use as excuses:
* God knows my heart
* I am a good person
* This is who I am, accept it
* This is how I have always been
* That was not my intention
* This is all I know
* No one ever thought of me differently
* I have been through so much in my life
* I never get a break
* No one understands me
* Get used to it.
* **Biblical practises:**
* Prophesy over yourself
* Speak the Word of God over yourself
* Speak what you believe
* Speak those things that are not as though they were (Romans 4:17)
* Declare the promises of God over your life.
* **Strengthen yourself in the Lord – King David**
* In one of the most difficult times in King David’s life he had to learn how to encourage himself in the Lord because everyone had turned against him and wanted to kill him. David had to fortify his mind, reject the negative narrative, and create a counter argument for his soul, otherwise he would have literally lost his life.
* Talk yourself out of the strongholds you believe. Consider some of these key actions:
* It may not be real
* You may need to unlearn some things
* Quiet down your emotions
* Speak truth
* Speak possibilities
* Find the truth – do your due diligence.

# **Peace That Surpasses Understanding**

* **You think yourself to peace** – the cognitive side of the mind of Christ.

* Paul said, “think on these things”, and “set your mind on”. The believer has a responsibility over their own thought process and to ensure that it is focussed on the things that are above and not beneath:
* Philippians 3:15
* Colossians 3:2
* Philippians 4:7.
* Thoughts precede peace; therefore, you must think the right things to experience the peace of God and with God**.**
* Think critically about peace that is grounded in God’s truth
* The peace of God is beyond our understanding
* The grace of God kicks in at some point because we are “thinking on these things”. We do our part/the right thing and God does the rest

* Repeated thinking makes things concrete in our mind. This can be both positive and negative and we begin to truly believe and act upon these thoughts. For example, some people can think themselves to be sick.

# **The “Bigger and Better Principle”**

This principle is about setting your focus on something that is superior to what you are arguing with and/or you are going to lose. Christ is always superior! This can also be called, “The Displacement Theory" where a stronghold needs to be displaced by something that is weightier.

* **We tear down arguments through Christ because He is bigger, better, stronger, and able.**
* When you are going through a trial you must find something bigger and better to put your attention. Specifically, you must replace it with something of greater value/worth or something you love more.
* For example, Joseph resisted the sexual advances of Mrs. Potiphar because he believed there was a greater purpose for his life.
* Esau, however, did the exact opposite. He sold his birthright for a pot of stew. He could not see that anything was more important to him at that moment. His belly was all he cared about and treated the things of God as common.

# **THE STRONGMAN**

Jesus teaches that the “strongman” is a demonic entity and/or spirit. They enter people’s lives through various means, and they abide in areas of the heart and/or the soul and even the mind. Therefore, if a demon spirit is in control of an area of an individual’s life, in the worst-case scenario, it would be full-blown possession. In other words, the demonic presence is in total control of the vessel, meaning that the person can be out of their mind.

Unlike a stronghold that needs to be cast down, the strongman needs to be cast out. For this reason, it requires spiritual authority or a stronger “man” to bind him and cast him out. If the stronghold is like a fortified prison, the strongman is the “warden” of the prison. This is another level entirely of a spiritual battle and confrontation. In this type of scenario, the warden commands you and tells you what to do, when to do it, and how to do it. The individual is no longer in control of this part of their life—it is under the control of a demonic entity. This is where an individual will indicate that they have no power/control over their actions and/or behaviours and they are unable to resist.

It is the anointing that breaks the yoke:

**Isaiah 10:27**

And it shall come to pass in that day, that his burden shall be taken away from off thy shoulder, and his yoke from off thy neck, and the yoke shall be destroyed because of the anointing.

**Return of an Unclean Spirit**

**Matthew 12:43-45**

**43**“When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest, and finds none. **44**Then he says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came.’ And when he comes, he finds *it* empty, swept, and put in order. **45**Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last *state* of that man is worse than the first. So shall it also be with this wicked generation.”

* Demons require human bodies to express their will and agenda
* Demon spirits desire to live within humans, in fact, they considered it their home
* They are comfortable invading human beings
* They will not leave unless they are forced and/or commanded to do so
* They would only leave by the Word of Christ and His authority
* When they are cast out, they find no rest and look for a way to re-enter their host
* They find seven other spirits that are worse than themselves
* The number seven means complete; therefore, this individual would be fully possessed
* Demon spirits love to enter people (houses) that are clean swept and orderly
* There is a difference between:
* **Spiritual attacks** – demonic irritations that are usually temporary and focussed to discourage and disorient
* **Oppression**– outward spiritual battles that are consistent and systematic – they can have a long-term effect
* **Possession** – internal full control of demonic presence, this would involve a demonic spirit and or spirits.

**Matthew 12:25-29**

**25**But Jesus knew their thoughts, and said to them: “Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand. **26**If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? **27**And if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast *them* out? Therefore they shall be your judges. **28**But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you. **29**Or how can one enter a strong man’s house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his hous

* When demons are cast out, the Kingdom of God is present and has come
* The Kingdom of God has greater authority than the strongman and the kingdom of Satan
* Demons are referred to as a “strongman”
* They need to be cast out or evicted
* They operate by the legal law of permission, in other words, they have been granted access by the individual
* Consider how demons can enter:
* Sinful behaviour – some sins have spirit power attached to them
* Addictive behaviours
* Fear
* Trauma
* Abuse
* The eye gate
* The mind
* The ear gate
* Curses
* Generational inheritance
* Introduced by others into demonic practices.

When Christians submit the members of their bodies to unrighteousness, that very thing can become a master or a strongman in their life (Romans 6:13). That is, a person can be overtaken by a spiritual demonic entity in that particular area of their life because they have made a covenant with it.

Believers must **renounce** these covenants and areas of agreement with demonic forces for these demon spirits to realize they are no longer welcomed. This is an act of strong contrition and repentance.

**How Do I Know If I Have A “Strongman”?**

**Checklist:**

1. The adversity that I sense seems to have spiritual power behind it.
2. I can feel an evil presence around me or in me.
3. I cannot control myself when it comes to this area and/or behaviour.
4. I am overwhelmed and powerless to fight back.
5. I am constantly thinking about this thing – even to the point of torment.
6. My character has changed – I am not the same person that I was.
7. Strange and unexplained circumstances happen around me.

# **QUOTES**

*“If we allow strongholds to be erected in our minds eventually, we become their prisoner.”*

*“Prayer is far more intentional and strategic than we think.”*

*“Prayer involves our thoughts.”*

*“Peace is something that you practice.”*

*“The moment you tell yourself that what your are thinking is wrong, you protect yourself from being a prisoner and being enslaved.”*

*“You don’t listen to your thoughts - you let your thoughts listen to Christ.”*

*“People isolate themselves because they believe their own stories.”*

*“We need truth to confront us because our thoughts are biased.”*

*“We need to invite voices that are unbiased- Jesus - Holy Spirit.”*

*“Negative self talk that is not confronted will pull you away from God.”*

*“As Christians, the best way to know what spirit is behind a movement is to ask the question: Who is Jesus to you?”*

*The bigger and better Principle*

*“You have to find something that you genuinely think is bigger and better” ~Pastor Moses Khan*

*“If you treasure Christ you may have to take the lonely road.”*

*“The devil is a legalistic squatter. If you give demons permission, then they have a right to operate in your life.”*

*“If you don’t have strategy, power can be useless”*

*“Schemes are not defeated by swords but by strategy.” ~Pastor Moses Khan*

# **QUESTIONS & DISCUSSION**

1. Explain the difference between a “stronghold” and a “strongman”.
2. Can Christians have a strongman? Why or why not?
3. How can we practically practice peace? What does it look like on a daily basis? What are some best practises?
4. Provide three biblical examples of individuals that displayed the principle of, “bigger and better”. What did they give up in order to have more of God?
5. What kind of power is required to cast out demons?
6. Explain why Jesus said that the kingdom of God was present if he was casting out demonic forces.
7. If a person has a stronghold, does that automatically mean that a strongman is present?
8. How is the devil a legalistic squatter? What does this mean in reality?