

STRONGHOLDS IN THE MIND

Acts 19

Lesson 29 in a Series about the 1st Century Church

The spiritual battleground is in the mind. The casualties are very physical and affect our lives in many different ways. However, it all starts with Satan's attack in subtle ways and suggestions. Remember how the questioning of Eve in the Garden was effective in causing her to doubt the truth and authority of God's Word? The attack is often subtle and seems to be upon us before we realize it. Satan is able to do this by building strongholds in our mind: a place from which he can operate. A place which Satan considers permanent in the spiritual war.

God's Word tells us the war cannot be fought with physical weapons. The casualties may be quite physical, but the battles must be fought spiritually. If you are struggling with sin in your life and it seems you just can't claim victory, it may be you are waging war in the physical realm. You may be fighting your battle with sin through human effort.

Satan must be conquered and will only be conquered through the use of divine weapons. If we try to conquer the evil affecting our lives with our own will power or strength of character, we will fail without a doubt. That would be like fighting skin cancer with Vaseline Intensive Care. Some physical problems require more drastic measures. So do spiritual problems.

Identifying Strongholds

A stronghold is a place in your mind from which Satan is allowed to operate. How did he get a place in my mind? Eve may have wondered the same thing. How did a few questions cause such disaster? Satan plans his questions/suggestions as a way of "getting in the door" of your mind. Once a thought is entertained, it becomes a place from which Satan can operate. The longer we allow these evil thoughts, the stronger his hold on our minds. Let me use an example from the computer age. Our mind is our hard drive and stores and organizes the information we process. When we allow bad information to be stored on our hard drive, it can affect the way we respond to a stimulus or the way we function in our lives. As most of you know, when you get something wrong in the hard drive, your computer may not work the way you want it to.

Acts 19:23ff

23 About that time there arose a great disturbance about the Way. 24 A silversmith named Demetrius, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought in no little business for the craftsmen.

27 There is danger not only that our trade will lose its good name, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will be discredited, and the goddess herself, who is worshiped throughout the province of Asia and the world, will be robbed of her divine majesty."

28 When they heard this, they were furious and began shouting: "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" 29 Soon the whole city was in an uproar.

32 The assembly was in confusion: Some were shouting one thing, some another. Most of the people did not even know why they were there.

Demolishing Strongholds

Demolish strongholds with divine weapons. The power Satan has in our lives is determined by what we allow him to control. Remember that as God's children we have the power to remove the strongholds in our mind, but it must be with the spiritual, divine weapons that are powerful enough to overcome Satan.

When you have a pop-up screen on your computer, it is there because you have allowed an outside source to place information on your hard drive. You may not have intended to allow it. This is most often the way strongholds are formed on your hard drive. You permit an outside source to place a small program on your computer called a “cookie.” The cookie is a place from which the outside source can continue to operate in your computer.

How can we get rid of the cookies? We must erase the part of our hard drive where these strongholds are stored. We can also go into the programming mode and not permit the placement of cookies of our computer. This is done through prayer and Bible study.

Make the connection of our computer example to our very real war in the battlefield of our minds. Satan wants to place “cookies” in your mind so he can continue to operate in your life. What may start as a question or seemingly harmless thought may be enough for Satan to begin to build a stronghold. Demolish the stronghold and erase the information from your mind.

When you became a Christian, you were born again. **“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!” (2 Corinthians 5:17)**

What power made it possible to be born again? Divine power. It is the power of God that forgives sin. If Satan has been allowed to continue to operate in your mind, the only power strong enough to overcome him is divine power. *The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.*

Demolishing Arguments & Pretensions

2 Corinthians 10:3-5

3 For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. 4 The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. 5 We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

The Word of God is powerful in exposing and demolishing Satan’s arguments and pretensions. The divine power to demolish these evil intruders is found in the truth of the knowledge of God. This is one of our weapons in the spiritual war!

How can we expect to demolish arguments and pretensions if we do not use the proper weapon or know how to use it? The truth of God’s Word can be seen demolishing the pretensions in Satan’s temptations of Jesus (Matthew 4:1-11). Each time the devil tempted Him, Jesus would respond with the truth of God’s Word: *“It is written...”*

Taking Our Thoughts Captive

When the enemy sends us one of his thoughts, take it captive and make it obedient to Christ. We can do this by telling ourselves, “This thought is not like God’s thoughts. It is against God and His revealed will. No matter how good this makes me feel, no matter how much I may want to do it, it is a thought from hell, sent from the enemy. By Christ’s authority, I am going to make it my captive and make it obedient to Christ.”

If we continue to successfully take evil thoughts captive day by day, we will begin to win spiritual battles in our lives because—whoever controls the mind controls the battle. Satan will no longer have an influence in your life, you will have the mind of Christ!

Does this sound *too easy*? It won’t be easy if you try to do battle on your own with your own weapons. The battle belongs to the Lord. Allow Him to control the thoughts and actions of your life by submitting to His Word. Obedience to the Word demolishes Satan’s power and claims the victory in Jesus!

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