

Lost & Found Center Teaching Series



OVERCOMING STRONGHOLDS

Introduction

For those of us in Christ, we are now children of light. Everything about us is light.

Jesus is the light.

The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world. John 1:9
NIV

We are children of light.

For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light Ephesians 5:8 NIV

We are destined for a kingdom of light.

...giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. Colossians 1:12 NIV

Our God is Light

This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. 1 John 1:5 NIV

We are children of light, who serve a Lord of light, with a future of light, destined for a kingdom of light, run by a God of light. Any questions? We need to get accustomed to light. It is our destiny. It is our potential. It is our new spiritual core. We may be well acquainted with darkness. We now need to get acclimated to the light. We will be miserable if we don't. We'll be out of place if we don't operate in the light. The Holy Spirit wants to get us to the place where only light satisfies us. He wants to take us to a place where we scramble for the light; where we can't rest outside of the light. He wants to get us to a place where we can't have peace without the light.

Why? Because we now belong to the light.

But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. 1 Thessalonians 5:8 NIV

We belong to the day. We belong to the light. Okay?

So what I want you to do is to think of your future. Think of where God is taking you. See the possibilities. See the limitless options in God. See a future just full of light. See a future of freedom. It's kind of like looking at the sun with your eyes closed, where you can just about see the light through your eyelids and you know that everything is bright, bright, bright on the other side. That's our future in God through Jesus Christ. Can you get that picture?

The Problem

There's a problem here for many of us. The problem is when we turn to face the light; sometimes we don't see the light. Sometimes we have our views obstructed. There are things in our way that obscure the light. There are things in our view that limit the potential, the possibilities, the freedoms, the expressions, the options of our life in God through Christ. There's a name for those things. They are called strongholds.

The following represent a few interesting characteristics of strongholds:

Strongholds are strong and they hold.

That would imply that strongholds are not easily removed. That would also imply that strongholds have a root system and a foundation in our lives.

Dictionary.com describes a stronghold as a well-fortified place or a place of survival and refuge.

Strongholds are structures that block the light - the light of God.

As we just discussed. They limit freedom, expression, possibilities, destiny, calling, growth and potential – our life in God. They limit our life in God and they are not easily removed. What a drag. Strongholds add no value to you. They bring no benefit. They are not there for you to learn from or experience. They are not there to develop character or to build a testimony. They block the light of God. They block the light of God. Get it?

Strongholds are structures that exist on our property.

Here's the difficult part. Strongholds are heavily fortified structures that block the light of God and they exist on our property. How did strongholds get built? It could have been many ways. It could have been our own doing. It could have been the influence of others. It could have been a demonic assignment. However, did I not mention that they are on our property? That means, that they continue to exist by our approval in some way. There has been some agreement by us in some way.

We saw this in my last lesson called **Surviving a Spiritual Assault**. In the kingdom of God you can be overpowered. That means you can come against a foe with superior power. However, superior power is not enough to transfer authority. The transfer of authority requires agreement. Power then is used as a mechanism to intimidate and to convince you to give up or to come into agreement. It cannot be used to take authority.

If strongholds are on our property then we always have the potential to remove them. This is good news.

What are strongholds again?

What are strongholds again? I didn't actually say. So far I have mainly described what they do. Here's the verse to focus on:

The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. 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. 2 Corinthians 10:4-5 NIV

Notice verse 4. It says two things. First, it says that our weapons are not the weapons of the world. Physical or even mental weapons are not sufficient in a spiritual fight. Those are just the weapons of the world. Things like will power, desire and intellect do not defeat spiritual forces nor do they bring down strongholds. If you remember the armor of God, our weapon is the word of God. In the spiritual realm the word of God is a sword that wields real not imaginary power. The only weapon we need.

Second, it says that our weapons have the power to demolish strongholds. Demolish is a good word since we've been talking about strongholds as structures. We have the power of demolition. We can approach strongholds like a wrecking crew and demolish the structures. But what are the structures? Is this only a conceptual exercise? Let's look at the next verse.

Notice how verse 4 ends with "**demolish strongholds**" and verse 5 begins "**We demolish arguments.**" This tells us the strongholds are arguments. You can think of these arguments as patterns of thinking or ideas or thoughts that you have formed that are a foundation for how you understand things. You could think of it as a set of reasons that you have formulated that describe such things as:

- Why you are the way you are
- Why you do the things you do
- Why you can't do what you want to do
- Why you can't do what God wants you to do
- Why you can't be what God wants you to be

Remember strongholds tend to be strong and they hold. They are not easily moved. They tend to have been around a long time. So long in fact that they:

Seem to belong. Seem to be legitimate. Seem to be immovable.

Notice again from the verse what they do. A stronghold "**sets itself up against the knowledge of God.**" It will block the light. Remember our future is to be full of light - light of the possibilities of God. We have structures that block this light. We can't be open to anything God wants because the light is blocked in some areas and instead of removing those obstacles, we convince ourselves that certain options aren't available to us.

It's like hiring a maid and the first thing she says is I don't cook, I don't do windows, I don't scrub toilets, I don't watch kids under 5, I don't drive, I won't stay past 5 p.m. and I don't work weekends or holidays. For each of these reasons let's say she has a legitimate argument. She has a past experience where it didn't work out and now is convinced in her mind that these are her limitations. She cannot even envision doing these things anymore or ever developing into a maid who can. These are her structures. They seem to belong. They seem legitimate. They seem immovable. Get the picture? Or do we need a more practical example.

Let's talk about a great stronghold in our modern society: fear. For some of us, we have a fear of people. This can translate into shyness. This is a fear that people may not like you or people may not respect you or that people may not value what you say. For some this can be based upon some past experiences, for some it's about their childhood and how they were raised and loved and validated. Now some very gifted people of God have this stronghold in their lives. What do strongholds do again? They block the light of God. How do you think this affects people of God? Watch this. It limits their future. They look into a future that has obstacles. They are afraid what God may tell them to do. They are not open to the possibilities. They then lean on their own understanding in the direction God is leading them in their lives because they are convinced the stronghold cannot be overcome. Some people of God with a calling on their life have convinced themselves they haven't been called because of this stronghold. They have resigned themselves that this is the way they are. Some of them defend their positions vigorously. Since they could never see themselves doing what they are afraid of, they are convinced that this is not God's will.

This is not about fear. This is about anything and everything that blocks the light of God. This is about strongholds. This is about anything that limits the potential of God in our lives.

Here's a basic verse:

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding.
Proverbs 3:5 NIV

The Bible says do not lean on your understanding. Do not lean on these structures. Can you see this? What structures do you maintain in your own life? What arguments against your future, your destiny and your calling: Seem to belong. Seem legitimate. Seem immovable.

Jesus Lord of All

Now understand the importance of seeing a clearer and clearer picture of Jesus? The bible says:

For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities--all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. Colossians 1:16-17 NIV

He is not limited in any way. He has supremacy over all things. By him and through him all things have their being and are held together. He has no limits. He has all power. I've said before about the old paradox of the irresistible force meeting the immovable object, that Jesus is that paradox. Jesus is the irresistible force – all power. Jesus is the immovable object – all strength. He moves all things and sustains all things.

See this verse. How about another of my favorites:

He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything. Colossians 1:18 NIV

And another one:

(Jesus is) far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. Ephesians 1:21 NIV

Sometimes with strongholds the light of God is blocked, where we forget that the Lord whom we serve is all powerful. Look at these three verses. Strongholds block the reality of these verses in our lives.

Going back to 2 Corinthians 10:4-5. A stronghold “**sets itself up against the knowledge of God.**” Strongholds cause us to draw the conclusion that our future is limited. It is not. Because our Lord is not limited. Strongholds cause us to draw the conclusion that we can't and won't change. That is not true because the Holy Spirit is at work within us. Strongholds limit the knowledge of God in our lives - who God is and what he can do through us.

Going Forward

Right about now is when I say that this study does not require you to do anything but just tune your thoughts and prayers accordingly. The only thing I desire is that you look and think and pray.

The first step in overcoming strongholds is to find them. Since they are often interwoven in our lives and our thinking, they can be hard to find. Strongholds are like a piece of furniture in your room that does not belong, but that has been around so long that you think it does. That's how hard they are to identify. We need the help of the Holy Spirit to discover them.

One way to find them is this. I want you to go back to our example of looking at the future. Strongholds reveal themselves when you look to the future because they block light. Look at your future right now. See a future of all the possibilities of your life in God through Christ. I'm talking the possibilities of the future, which is 5 minutes from now, or tomorrow, or the day after that, or next week, or next month, or next year, or 5 years from now, or 10 years or 20 years. We are a people of hope because of our lives in Christ.

The Lord desires that we overflow in hope:

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Romans 15:13 NIV

Okay stop. What ideas came into your head to convince you that your future is not full of hope? What area of anxiety do you have when I say that your future in Christ has no limits? What issues did you think about that oppose this verse Roman 15:13? Are these issues well known to you? Have you thought about them before? Are you ready to explain to me why these belong and are legitimate and are immovable in your case? These may be strongholds.

The next step is to run for help. Strongholds are strong. To overcome something strong we need more power. We ask the Holy Spirit in us to help us face this. Again, strongholds are spiritual problems that can only be resolved by spiritual solutions.

Going back to the verse, **“The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.”** We have divine power to demolish strongholds. The power is from the Holy Spirit in us. The weapon is the word of God. Divine power means power outside of you. It means his strength not yours. It means his endurance not yours. Christianity is not the way of great men with great discipline, great concentration and great wills. It is for those who lack and who are in need. It is for those who see their own weakness and their limitations, and ask for help.

Last step. What does it mean to demolish a stronghold? How do we do it? We look back at the verse.

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.

Notice what the word of God says in the end of this verse, “**we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.**” What this is saying is we need to compare these arguments of our lives against the word of God and against the knowledge of who God is. Compare. Compare an idea that you’ll never be strong enough with the idea that God is all powerful. We were talking about fear before. Let’s look at what Paul told his young student Timothy:

For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline.

2 Timothy 1:5 NIV

Look at this verse in the light of what we’ve just talked about. Paul is trying to demolish an argument inside Timothy. Timothy was having a bit of trouble with fear from having to deal with difficult people. The word of God states pointedly that a spirit of fear is not from God. Do not accept it. Refuse to let it dwell among you. Do not come to the conclusion that you must stay in this state. Regardless of how long it has plagued you, it does not belong. It is now contrary to your nature. The spirit of God in you is the power to overcome this stronghold. See it this way. Understand it. Pray this way. God will help you. The Holy Spirit will help you. Do not settle. Do not give up and be in agreement. This is his will. I guarantee it. I promise you.

This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him.1 John 5:14-15 NIV

Conclusion

We are people of a wonderful light like the following verse says:

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. 1 Peter 2:9 NIV

We are people of light, we belong to a kingdom of light, we worship a God of light and serve a Lord who was the true light that came into the world. Everything about us should be overflowing with hope and possibilities. When we’re not overflowing we are off in some way.

That’s why we oppose strongholds. They block the light. They set themselves up against the knowledge of God and his Son. We need the help of the Holy Spirit to find them, face them and demolish them.

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The Lord is raising up a people that will fully embrace who he is and what he has done for them. He is raising up a people who are going to be open to the fullness of the possibilities of God in their lives. May we be such a people with his help. Amen.

Notes

For Questions or Comments please respond to lostandfoundcenter@yahoo.com and visit www.lostandfoundcenter.org for additional information.

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