



STRONGHOLDS: Understanding and **DESTROYING** satan's Schemes **TOGETHER**

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

Grace Fellowship Church Shrewsbury
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Week One – INTRODUCTION: *What is a Stronghold?*

2 Corinthians 10 (NIV) - Paul and the Church

10 By the humility and gentleness of Christ, I appeal to you—I, Paul, who am “timid” when face to face with you, but “bold” toward you when away! ²I beg you that when I come I may not have to be as bold as I expect to be toward some people who think that we live by the standards of this world. ³For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. ⁴The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. ⁵We 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. ⁶And we will be ready to punish every act of disobedience, once your obedience is complete.

⁷You are judging by appearances. If anyone is confident that they belong to Christ, they should consider again that we belong to Christ just as much as they do. ⁸So even if I boast freely about the authority the Lord gave us for building you up rather than tearing you down, I will not be ashamed of it. ⁹I do not want to seem to be trying to frighten you with my letters. ¹⁰For some say, “His letters are weighty and forceful, but in person he is unimpressive and his speaking amounts to nothing.” ¹¹Such people should realize that what we are in our letters when we are absent, we will be in our actions when we are present.

¹²We do not dare to classify or compare ourselves with some who commend themselves. When they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are not wise. ¹³We, however, will not boast beyond proper limits, but will confine our boasting to the sphere of service God himself has assigned to us, a sphere that also includes you. ¹⁴We are not going too far in our boasting, as would be the case if we had not come to you, for we did get as far as you with the gospel of Christ. ¹⁵Neither do we go beyond our limits by boasting of work done by others.

Our hope is that, as your faith continues to grow, our sphere of activity among you will greatly expand, ¹⁶so that we can preach the gospel in the regions beyond you. For we do not want to boast about work already done in someone else's territory. ¹⁷But, "Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord." ¹⁸For it is not the one who commends himself who is approved, but the one whom the Lord commends.

Jeremiah 6:16

"STAND at the crossroads and LOOK; ASK for the ancient paths, ASK where the good way is, and WALK in it, and you will FIND REST for your souls.

But you said, 'We will not walk in it.'

Message Notes

Message Notes:

Questions for Reflection:

1. After reading 2 Corinthians 10, how would you define a stronghold? (see verse 5)
2. What does Paul mean when he says, “live by the standards of this world?” What are those standards? (verse 2)
3. In verse 4, Paul says, “The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world.” What are the weapons of the Kingdom of God? How do they differ from the “weapons of this world?”
4. Would you say that your life is defined by using the weapons of the Kingdom? Why or why not?
5. How do believers demolish arguments and pretensions? How do we know that a thought or an argument is “setting itself up against the knowledge of God”?
6. How do we take our thoughts captive to Christ? Give clear examples.
7. Read Jeremiah 6:16 and circle all the verbs. Describe in your own words what each one means.
8. Why is it significant that at the end of this verse it reads: “But you said, we will not walk in it”? Why didn't those who God was challenging say they wouldn't stand, look, or ask?
9. What significance does the above have to do with demolishing strongholds?
10. What does rest have to do with strongholds?
11. Research the word stronghold in scripture. What does it mean that “God is our stronghold” (Ps 18:2, Nahum 1:7, Ps 27:1-3)?
12. What is your spiritual area of influence to rule and reign with God? (See 2 Corinthians 10:13)
13. What stronghold thinking might you and the people around you believe that is contrary to God's will?

Journal Notes

Week Two – STAND: *Being Still and Attentive*

1 Kings 19 - Elijah and Jezebel

19 And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, also how he had executed all the prophets with the sword. ² Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, “So let the gods do *to me*, and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time.” ³ And when he saw *that*, he arose and ran for his life, and went to Beersheba, which *belongs* to Judah, and left his servant there.

⁴ But he himself went a day’s journey into the wilderness and came and sat down under a broom tree. And he prayed that he might die, and said, “It is enough! Now, Lord, take my life, for I *am* no better than my fathers!”

⁵ Then as he lay and slept under a broom tree, suddenly an angel touched him, and said to him, “Arise *and* eat.” ⁶ Then he looked, and there by his head was a cake baked on coals, and a jar of water. So, he ate and drank, and lay down again. ⁷ And the angel of the Lord came back the second time, and touched him, and said, “Arise *and* eat, because the journey *is* too great for you.” ⁸ So he arose and ate and drank; and he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights as far as Horeb, the mountain of God.

⁹ And there he went into a cave, and spent the night in that place; and behold, the word of the Lord *came* to him, and He said to him, “What are you doing here, Elijah?”

¹⁰ So he said, “I have been very zealous for the Lord God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life.”

God’s Revelation to Elijah

¹¹ Then He said, “Go out, and stand on the mountain before the Lord.” And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces before the Lord, *but* the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an

earthquake, *but* the Lord *was* not in the earthquake; ¹² and after the earthquake a fire, *but* the Lord *was* not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice.

¹³ So it was, when Elijah heard *it*, that he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave. Suddenly a voice *came* to him, and said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

¹⁴ And he said, "I have been very zealous for the Lord God of hosts; because the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life."

¹⁵ Then the Lord said to him: "Go, return on your way to the Wilderness of Damascus; and when you arrive, anoint Hazael as king over Syria. ¹⁶ Also you shall anoint Jehu the son of Nimshi as king over Israel. And Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel Meholah you shall anoint as prophet in your place. ¹⁷ It shall be *that* whoever escapes the sword of Hazael, Jehu will kill; and whoever escapes the sword of Jehu, Elisha will kill. ¹⁸ Yet I have reserved seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him."

Message Notes:

Message Notes:

Questions for Reflection:

1. Read 1 Kings 18:16-46 and 1 Kings 19. What stronghold thinking might Elijah have in place? How are these strongholds inhibiting him?
2. What is the significance of the questions God asks repeatedly of Elijah: *"What are you doing here Elijah?"* (**Remember, when God asks us a question, it's never for His benefit, but ours.**)
3. What is significant about Elijah's response to God? How does his response indicate a stronghold (an established pattern of thinking that goes against the knowledge of God)?
4. Where might God be asking you "What are you doing here?"? What stronghold thinking may be contributing to you being in this place? What is God saying to you about this area?
5. Read Jeremiah 6:16 again. What does it mean to "stand at the crossroads"? How is this significant in overcoming stronghold thinking?
6. How often do you take time to be still and attentive before God? What are some of the things that keep you from taking this time? What stronghold thinking might be keeping you from taking this time?
7. Do you think you'll be able to identify your entrenched patterns of thinking without being still before God? Explain.
8. Some sources suggest that the average person makes 35,000 decisions per day. How does the word "crossroads" have significance in light of this estimate?
9. What significant "crossroads" are you facing currently? Are you taking time to stand in the presence of God in these areas? Why or why not? What is the fruit?
10. Look with God honestly at your relationships with others. What do you see? How might negative stronghold thinking be affecting the way you relate to others?
11. What past wounds in your life might be the source and origin of your stronghold thinking? Remember: "Every fruit has a root." What is the fruit of your negative stronghold thinking?

Journal Notes

Week Three – LOOK: *The Journey Within*

2 Samuel 12:1-13 Nathan and David

¹The Lord sent Nathan to David. When he came to him, he said, “There were two men in a certain town, one rich and the other poor. ² The rich man had a very large number of sheep and cattle, ³ but the poor man had nothing except one little ewe lamb he had bought. He raised it, and it grew up with him and his children. It shared his food, drank from his cup and even slept in his arms. It was like a daughter to him.

⁴ “Now a traveler came to the rich man, but the rich man refrained from taking one of his own sheep or cattle to prepare a meal for the traveler who had come to him. Instead, he took the ewe lamb that belonged to the poor man and prepared it for the one who had come to him.”

⁵ David burned with anger against the man and said to Nathan, “As surely as the Lord lives, the man who did this must die! ⁶ He must pay for that lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity.”

⁷ Then Nathan said to David, “You are the man! This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: ‘I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. ⁸ I gave your master’s house to you, and your master’s wives into your arms. I gave you all Israel and Judah. And if all this had been too little, I would have given you even more. ⁹ Why did you despise the word of the Lord by doing what is evil in his eyes? You struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and took his wife to be your own. You killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. ¹⁰ Now, therefore, the sword will never depart from your house, because you despised me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own.’

¹¹ “This is what the Lord says: ‘Out of your own household I am going to bring calamity on you. Before your very eyes I will take your wives and give them to one who is close to you, and he will sleep with your wives in broad daylight. ¹² You did it in secret, but I will do this thing in broad daylight before all Israel.’”

¹³ Then David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the Lord.”

Lamentations 3:40-42

³⁷Who can speak and have it happen if the Lord has not decreed it? ³⁸Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that both calamities and good things come? ³⁹Why should the living complain when punished for their sins? ⁴⁰Let us examine our ways and test them and let us return to the Lord. ⁴¹Let us lift up our hearts and our hands to God in heaven and say: ⁴²"We have sinned and rebelled and you have not forgiven."

Psalm 139 For the director of music. Of David. A psalm.

¹You have searched me, Lord, and you know me. ²You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. ³You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. ⁴Before a word is on my tongue you, Lord, know it completely. ⁵You hem me in behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me. ⁶Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain. ⁷Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? ⁸If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. ⁹If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, ¹⁰even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast. ¹¹If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me," ¹²even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you. ¹³For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. ¹⁴I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. ¹⁵My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. ¹⁶Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. ¹⁷How precious to me are your thoughts, God! How vast is the sum of them! ¹⁸Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand—when I awake, I am still with you. ¹⁹If only you, God, would slay the wicked! Away from me, you who are bloodthirsty! ²⁰They speak of you with evil intent; your adversaries misuse your name. ²¹Do I not hate those who hate you, Lord, and abhor those who are in rebellion against you? ²²I have nothing but hatred for them; I count them my enemies. ²³Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. ²⁴See if there is any offensive way in me and lead me in the way everlasting.

Message Notes

Questions for Reflection:

Read Psalm 139 and 2 Samuel 12:1-13

1. David says at the end of Psalm 139 the following words: *“Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me and lead me in the way everlasting.”* How does David’s knowledge of who God is, and who he is in Psalm 139, lead David to the place that he can “LOOK” deep inside himself and ask God to show him all the difficult things he may be believing?
2. How do “anxious thoughts” communicate stronghold thinking? What are some of your anxious thoughts?
3. In 2 Samuel 12, Nathaniel reveals to David a “blind spot,” but David doesn’t see clearly what he has done. What might stronghold thinking have to do with David being in such denial about his actions and heart? What might you be in denial about?
4. A true sign of stronghold thinking is the inability or unwillingness to honestly self-examine and own our wrongs. Where might you show this inability or unwillingness? Ask some around you where you might be blind to the truth of your condition.
5. Look with God honestly at your relationships with others. What do you see? How might negative stronghold thinking be affecting the way you relate to others? What damage is coming as a result?
6. What past wounds in your life might be the source and origin of your stronghold thinking? What is the fruit of your negative stronghold thinking?
7. Self-protection and fear are at the roots of most strongholds. In what areas of your life do you practice self-protection through justifying, rationalizing and becoming defensive?
8. Read the Peacemakers Pledge and consider all that God calls us to be for one another. What are some of the risks you might need to take in order to follow him?
9. Begin making a list of some of the strongholds that you, your family and other communities you are part of might believe. Pay careful attention to how these thoughts lead to how you respond to others.

Journal Notes

Week Four – ASK: *Prayers of Binding and Loosing*

Matthew 16 - Jesus and the Disciples

The Pharisees and Sadducees came to Jesus and tested him by asking him to show them a sign from heaven.² He replied, “When evening comes, you say, ‘It will be fair weather, for the sky is red,’³ and in the morning, ‘Today it will be stormy, for the sky is red and overcast.’ You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times.⁴ A wicked and adulterous generation looks for a sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah.” Jesus then left them and went away.

⁵ When they went across the lake, the disciples forgot to take bread. ⁶ “Be careful,” Jesus said to them. “Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”⁷ They discussed this among themselves and said, “It is because we didn’t bring any bread.”

⁸ Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked, “You of little faith, why are you talking among yourselves about having no bread? ⁹ Do you still not understand? Don’t you remember the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many basketfuls you gathered? ¹⁰ Or the seven loaves for the four thousand, and how many basketfuls you gathered? ¹¹ How is it you don’t understand that I was not talking to you about bread? But be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”¹² Then they understood that he was not telling them to guard against the yeast used in bread, but against the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

¹³ When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?”

¹⁴ They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”¹⁵ “But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?”¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”

¹⁷ Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. ¹⁸ And I tell you that you are Peter,^[b] and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades^[c] will not overcome it. ¹⁹ I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be^[d] bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be^[e] loosed in heaven.” ²⁰ Then he ordered his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

²⁸ “Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his Kingdom.”

²¹ From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.

²² Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. “Never, Lord!” he said. “This shall never happen to you!”

²³ Jesus turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.”

²⁴ Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ²⁵ For whoever wants to save their life^[f] will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. ²⁶ What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? ²⁷ For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father’s glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done.

²⁸ “Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.”

Message Notes:

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Questions for Reflection:

1. Read Matthew 16. Where do you see indications of stronghold thinking? In the Pharisees? In the disciples? In Peter specifically?
2. How does Peter's stronghold thinking lead him to act and feel? What might be the "root of this fruit"? How does this same stronghold play a part in your life?
3. How might these strongholds have been demolished if these people had just turned to Jesus and ASKED Him for the truth?
4. In verse 17, Jesus points out a central truth. What is that truth? How does that same truth impact our ability to exercise authority in Christ and overcome strongholds?
5. In verse 19, Jesus says *"I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be^l loosed in heaven."* What does it mean that we have been given the "keys of the kingdom of heaven"?
6. What is the significance of binding and loosing in how we pray?
7. How does asking God for truth change your responsibility in overcoming stronghold thinking?
8. What binding and loosing prayers might you pray for yourself, your family, the church and the region?
9. Begin praying prayers for binding and loosing in the areas of your strongholds, trusting God to answer your prayers and provide direction to greater freedom, rest and effectiveness for the Kingdom of God.

Journal Notes

Week Five – WALK: *The Secret of Radical Obedience*

EXODUS 33 - Moses and God

1Then the Lord said to Moses, “Leave this place, you and the people you brought up out of Egypt, and go up to the land I promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, saying, ‘I will give it to your descendants.’ **2**I will send an angel before you and drive out the Canaanites, Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. **3**Go up to the land flowing with milk and honey. But I will not go with you, because you are a stiff-necked people and I might destroy you on the way.” **4**When the people heard these distressing words, they began to mourn, and no one put on any ornaments. **5**For the Lord had said to Moses, “Tell the Israelites, ‘You are a stiff-necked people. If I were to go with you even for a moment, I might destroy you. Now take off your ornaments and I will decide what to do with you.’” **6**So the Israelites stripped off their ornaments at Mount Horeb.

7Now Moses used to take a tent and pitch it outside the camp some distance away, calling it the “tent of meeting.” Anyone inquiring of the Lord would go to the tent of meeting outside the camp. **8**And whenever Moses went out to the tent, all the people rose and stood at the entrances to their tents, watching Moses until he entered the tent. **9**As Moses went into the tent, the pillar of cloud would come down and stay at the entrance, while the Lord spoke with Moses. **10**Whenever the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance to the tent, they all stood and worshiped, each at the entrance to their tent. **11**The Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend. Then Moses would return to the camp, but his young aide Joshua son of Nun did not leave the tent.

12Moses said to the Lord, “You have been telling me, ‘Lead these people,’ but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. You have said, ‘I know you by name and you have found favor with me.’ **13**If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways so I may know you and continue to find favor with you. Remember that this nation is your people.” **14**The Lord replied, “My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.”

15Then Moses said to him, “If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here. **16**How will anyone know that you are pleased with me and with your people unless you go with us? What else will distinguish me and your people from all the other people on the face of the earth?”

17And the Lord said to Moses, “I will do the very thing you have asked, because I am pleased with you and I know you by name.”

18Then Moses said, “Now show me your glory.”

19And the Lord said, “I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the Lord, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.

20But,” he said, “you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live.”

21Then the Lord said, “There is a place near me where you may stand on a rock. **22**When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by. **23**Then I will remove my hand and you will see my back; but my face must not be seen.”

Message Notes:

Message Notes:

Questions for Reflection:

1. Read Jeremiah 6:16 again. Why do you think that God's people respond, "We will not walk in it"? Why is "walking" so significant that they choose to reject only this aspect of God's command?
2. How might we as God's people obey the first four verbs in Jeremiah 6:16 (Stand, Look, Ask, Ask) and then stop short of walking?
3. Why is walking so significant in demolishing strongholds (established patterns of thinking that run contrary to God's will)?
4. Psalm 103:7 reads "He made known his ways to Moses, his deeds to the people of Israel." Why do you think God revealed more of His heart to Moses versus the people of Israel?
5. Read Exodus 33. Reflect on the above question again with any additional insight from this passage.
6. Read Exodus 33:12-14. How is God's promise to Moses essential to his act of radical obedience? How does this same promise free you to take huge risks in trusting God?
7. How does Moses respond to God's promise in verses 15-16? What does this say about Moses and the way he is thinking? How does God respond? How does this show the heart of God toward Moses and toward us?
8. God gives Moses very specific instructions to follow in verses 21-23. We know that Moses followed these instructions, because he did not die at this point. What can we learn from how specifically God speaks to Moses? What is God saying to you about how you can obey Him?
9. What resistance are you experiencing in obeying God? Remember, your flesh will "scream" when you walk in the Spirit. What is your flesh saying to you about holding on to your strongholds? Think specifically about any wounds that you have identified and fears/self-protective strategies that you practice.
10. Read James 1:22 and John 2:5. How do these verses speak to the words in Jeremiah 6:16?
11. In addition to demolishing strongholds, what are some of the other benefits of obeying God? Be specific.

Journal Notes

Week Six – REST: *Celebration in Testimony, Word and Worship*

Revelation 12:7-12 (NIV) – Jesus and Us!

⁷ Then war broke out in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. ⁸ But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. ⁹ The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.

¹⁰ Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say:

“Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Messiah. For the accuser of our brothers and sisters, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down.

¹¹ **They triumphed over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony;** they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.

¹² Therefore rejoice, you heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short.”

Reflect on how God has demolished strongholds in your life and write out a testimony. Tell others and celebrate all that He has done!

My Witness to God’s Divine Power at Work in Me:

My Witness to God's Divine Power at Work in Me: