

Breaking Spiritual Strongholds

All believers are in a war — a war with their adversary, the Devil (*1 Pet. 5:8*), and his evil spiritual forces which he dispatches and assigns to perpetrate his wickedness throughout the world. The scripture says that we “*wrestle... against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places*” (*Eph. 6:12*).

We are well aware of the evil characteristics of Satan, that he “*kills, steals, and destroys*” (*John 10:10*). But beyond his routine harassments, temptations or hit-and-run attacks, the Devil’s forces seek territory to establish long-term strongholds in which they may dominate and hold captive. Satanic forces search for people, cities, and nations in which they are not resisted and where they may flourish.

“Strongholds” could be actual “demon possession,” but can merely be a “strong” influence or grip, persistent oppression, obsessions, hindrances or harassment. Believers cannot be demon possessed, but many Christians are often the victims of Satan’s strongholds.

Getting to the Root of the Problem

The devil’s primary strategy is to disguise his activities so that it appears that someone or something else is to blame. He wants us to get our attention on his surrogates, his instruments, his hindrances and “wrestle” with them, so that our battle will be directed against the “symptoms” instead of the “real source.”

We all know that a decongestant will help relieve a stuffy nose, but it will not cure a cold. Likewise, you can fight with the symptoms of the Devil, but you will not end the problems until you deal with the source and bind the “strong man.”

Remember when Peter resisted Jesus’ decision to return to Jerusalem, knowing that He would be crucified there? Jesus did not rebuke Peter, but turned to Peter and rebuked Satan, “*Get behind me Satan*” (*Matt. 16:23*). Peter wasn’t demon possessed, and probably didn’t intend to be an offense. However, the Devil inspired Peter’s statement, and Jesus went after the real source.

Paul said that our battle is not with “*flesh and blood*” but with *spiritual adversaries* (*Eph. 6:12*). How important it is that we understand what the real root of the problem is — “who” our real enemy is. It is Satan, not flesh and blood, not our brethren, not our family, not our children, not husbands and wives, not employers, nor our government! The Devil is the enemy!

Binding the Strong Man

One time, after Jesus had cast out a devil and healed a deaf and mute boy, Jesus explained that in order to overturn the works and activity of the Devil, we must bind him first. “*Or else 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 house*” (*Matt. 12:29*). In order to neutralize the Devil’s works, we must go and deal directly with the source and bind up the devil so that his hands are tied. Then we’ll be able to take back what he’s stolen and bring a halt to his actions.

I’ve preached in many cities that have been strongholds for the Devil. The symptoms of this are many. Often the local churches suffer senseless conflicts or unexplained problems. The congregations experience little growth, and the preaching of the Word is not easily proclaimed or well received by the community. These are the symptoms, but behind the scene Satan is the culprit. In such cases, those spiritual strongholds must be dealt with and bound for the ministry to be effective.

All Believers Have Authority over the Devil

All Christians must be aware that God has equipped them to overcome Satan’s power. The Apostle Paul said that “*the weapons of our warfare are not carnal (of a fleshly or earthly nature), but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds*” (*2 Cor. 10:4*).

You may recall the time when the seventy disciples returned to the Lord rejoicing about the results of their ministry. They remarked, “*Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name*” (*Luke 10:17*). But then Jesus pointed out that the great marvel of this was that the devils were subject to them because their names were “written in heaven.” In other words, because they were saved — because of their relationship with Christ, they had authority over the Devil in the name of Jesus.

Jesus has given all His followers — all those who know Jesus personally as their Lord and Savior — the authority to use His name to expel the forces of evil. To all believers, Jesus said, “*In My name they will cast out demons...*” (*Mark 16:17*).

How to Break Strongholds and Keep them Broken!

1. AUTHORITY — Every believer has the right to use the authority of Jesus' name to bind and take authority over Satan's activities. *"No one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man, and then he will plunder his house"* (Mark 3:27). Issue a spoken command to the devil that he is bound and he must leave the stronghold! Exercising authority in the name of Jesus will expel the Devil's influence. *"And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues..."* (Mark 16:17).

2. INTERCESSION — Come together with other believers to pray and intercede against strongholds until you get results. There is intensified power in the gathering of more believers. Prayer with fasting intensifies faith, and faith will break strongholds. *"Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, Why could we not cast him out? However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting"* (Matthew 17:19,21).

3. DISPLACEMENT — Establish the presence of God. Where Satan has been commanded to leave, fill it up with God's presence. Where the presence of the Lord is, the Devil isn't! Satan doesn't want to hang around where people are lifting up Jesus in worship, in singing and prayer. The presence of the Lord displaces the Devil. *"For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?"* (2 Corinthians 6:14).

4. RESISTANCE — Submit yourselves and draw close to God. The Bible says this is how

we resist Satan and he will flee. The Devil runs from submitted, yielded Christians. He runs from your life, and will run away from where you go. *"Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you"* (James 4:7).

5. OCCUPATION — Give no place or vacancy to the Devil. With Satan departed, fill the void with God. Let righteousness be the standard rule and behavior. Provide no pocket of rebellion, corruption or immorality in which Satan can find refuge to rebuild his influence or strength. The scripture says to not *"give place to the devil"* (Eph. 4:27).

6. FORTIFICATION — Clothe yourself with God's armor. Take upon you daily, the full array of God's spiritual equipment that you may maintain battle-ready status. With the shield of faith, the sword of the Spirit (God's Word) and the other links of armor (Eph. 6:13-17), you will be ready to resist any satanic assault, and will be ready to engage the strongholds in others. *"Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil"* (Ephesians 6:11).

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