

STRONGHOLDS

Definitions from various teachers:

From a tape by Jack Frost, who repeated these definitions:

Strongholds: Habit structure of thoughts that are composed of ungodly beliefs that precede all of our actions.

Fortress of thoughts: A collection of thoughts against what God has revealed about Himself and what He has revealed about you. (This in and of itself is not like a demon having power over you).

Definition of the word HABIT:

A habit is an act that is repeated so often that it is involuntary, requiring no new decision of mind each time the thought or action is repeated.

(My words – a paraphrase of the above: A habit is an action, thought, or feeling, response, or reaction, that is repeated so often in thought, deed, and or feeling, that it becomes an involuntary response, without making any new conscious decision or going through a logical and reasonable thought process, each time the thought or action is repeated. It becomes a mental/emotional/ and or physical, knee jerk reaction, when one is exposed to certain circumstances, which generate physical and emotional stimuli. This can be triggered as one hears certain words, or interprets perceived or actual attitudes, actions, and reactions from others, or is placed in a given situation that triggers their habitual unpremeditated response. This activates the involuntary response that is hidden in a stronghold, and brought forth automatically, without any new decision to respond that way.)i.e. using a fork

Strongholds always exalt themselves against the truth of God' Word, and what He has revealed about Himself and about you. These ingrained and habitual ways of thinking, are so automatic, that you don't use reason or the input from the truth of God's Word to form a response or deduction about what is right/wrong – truth/error. Your response, is already programmed by what you have habitually thought, believed, and reacted to, and in a stronghold, this bypasses the normal process of weighing the facts and the truth of God's Word against the immediate inner or habitual response. (Mt 12:33-35 & Lu 6:43)

From the inner beliefs of the mind that is bound in a stronghold, will come a verbal, emotional, relational, or physical response, without the normal process of deductive or logical reasoning. It will be colored by the wounding of the soul and the deceptive beliefs that are formed out of that wounding. If you hear something over and over as you are forming an opinion, it will be an automatic assumption that comes to the forefront, when anything relevant to that appears on the screen of your mind. Like a flash card, where you memorize $2 + 2 = 4$, you will have an automatic response to things that stimulate those learned ways of thinking and responding. You won't stop and wonder if $2 + 2 = 4$, you will automatically think and say "4". What if whoever made your flash card made one that was incorrect, and for years you heard $2+2=6$? What will you respond when you hear $2 + 2$? If you respond 6, and the person you are in relationship with, says that that is the wrong answer, what will happen?

One of the ways that we often sin, because of a stronghold, is the secret way we let our thoughts come into agreement with the father of lies, rather than the Father of Love. I'm not saying that if you have a bad thought that you are sinning. Satan is a master and putting deceptive, negative, thoughts into our head and blaming us for thinking them. But, there is a difference between thinking a bad thought and in coming into agreement with a bad thought, and therefore coming into agreement with the father of lies – the accuser – the one who judges without mercy and with no grace.

Stronghold type thinking is like that. It is something that has been repeatedly thought about and agreed with so often, that these thoughts become an automatic way of thinking about people, self, God, & life, without any conscious decision on our part. It requires no new decision, no new thought process in our thinking, because it is like there is a rut in our mind, and when this type of circumstance comes before us, we don't reason it out, but automatically respond from that rut without thinking or making a new decision.

One of the strongholds that many of us face is the stronghold of rejection, that brings us into a position of having to perform to be worthy of love, and acceptance. This will cause us to be one who works or "task oriented." This will often alienate our affections from the very God of Love that we are working for, and we will begin to be more work's oriented and task oriented, than we are intimacy and relationship oriented. In doing this, we violate the "The Royal Law of Love." Jesus made it clear to Martha, that "ONE THING IS NEEDED."

There are not many Christians who have arrived at the place where their intimate relationship with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is their FIRST LOVE. That sad fact is true in the church and in the world, because from the minute we are born and “born again,” we are programmed to believe that what we do is more important than who we are and how {in our heart} we relate to God and others.

Our churches and the religious culture that instructed and trained us, has emphasized the fulfillment of the great commission, before we have fulfilled and committed ourselves to the GREAT COMMANDMENT of: “LOVING THE LORD OUR GOD WITH ALL OUR HEART, WITH ALL OUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL OUR STRENGTH AND WITH ALL OUR MIND AND LOVING OUR NEIGHBOR AS OUR SELVES.” Lu 10:27 Deut 6:5

One way that we can know whether we are walking in soulish (mental and emotional) strongholds is to ask ourselves, **WHERE HAVE MY THOUGHTS BEEN? Who am I in agreement with? Is my thinking in line with the love and the grace of God toward myself and others, or am I thinking and agreeing with the accuser of the brethren, - the one who judges, and sees and points out all of the ways that the law is not fulfilled, and brings accusation, judgment, and condemnation? Am I in agreement with the law of the Spirit of life, that springs from GRACE AND LOVE, or am I an accuser and condemner that operates under the law of sin and death – through holding up the standard of the law and condemnation, - rather than the perfect law of liberty that is born of GRACE, LOVE, MERCY, FORGIVENESS, and the cleansing of sin, by the Blood of the Lamb.**

If I am a task oriented person, then works and performance will be the rule by which I judge, rather than by love and grace. I will have a tendency to weight myself and others by the scale of what I think should be done, and when one falls short, there will be an automatic stronghold response that judges, accuses, and condemns for not living up to the law. (The law that is alive and well in the stronghold of my religious mind).

It would be wonderful if there could be a miraculous intervention and instant divine deliverance from these types of strongholds, but that is not the usual way that it happens. Rom 12:2 tells us that we are transformed by the renewing of

our mind. Strongholds are thought ruts in the mind that we travel down so often, that we respond to certain stimuli without even thinking or making a new decision. It is knee – jerk, and we are off to the races with our stronghold responses.

If we are going to stop this type of sin, we will have to first, **ACKNOWLEDGE IT. If we don't own a sin or a problem in our lives or in our soulish responses, we will never take it to the Lord. If we acknowledge it, we can then renounce it, repent of it, and begin the process of FORSAKING IT.**

We must confess it, receive our forgiveness and the cleansing of that unrighteousness, and then ask the Holy Spirit to help us walk out of this rut, by alerting us to the thoughts and responses that come to us from the area of this past stronghold in our lives. If we don't make this effort to partner with the Holy Spirit for the renewal of our mind – and the way we have thought and responded, that was in agreement with the deceiver/accuser, then we will probably continue to walk in this sinful thinking, attitude, and behavior until we are forced by crisis and painful circumstances to yield to the conviction and ministry of the Spirit of Truth, Who is in our lives to lead us into all truth. God will not forsake us in this place of sin, but it is our choice whether we will quickly see ourselves as we are and respond to the truth that the Lord is trying to bring us into. It is the truth that we know, believe, agree with, and receive personally, that will set us free, when we act upon it in a scriptural way.

After we acknowledge and confess it, we often will need to go to the root of why we continue to walk in this way that is so sorrowful and hurtful to us. If there is bad fruit in our life, there are bad and harmful roots and deposits. Mat 12:33-35, tells us that what is deposited in our hearts, whether for good or for evil, will produce fruits of like kind. If there are bad fruits, there are bad roots, and we must ask the Lord to leads us, by His Spirit, in dealing scripturally with any roots that are infected with unforgiveness, resentment, bitterness, and judgments. If we do not root these things out, they will continue to produce fruit for years to come, and that is not the freedom and abundant life that the Lord wanted us to receive in the Kingdom of Love. However, we cannot receive and walk in fullness of freedom, if we only do

the right and scriptural thing. We must receive a revelation into our wounded soul, of the unconditional – eternal LOVE OF THE FATHER. We need more than deliverance and transformation, we need a revelation of LOVE.

Sometimes we will be able to deal with these things alone with the Lord, but we must remember that Jam 5:16 tells us that there are times, when the scriptural way, to receive healing is, to confess our faults to someone else and receive the prayer of healing, allowing the Holy Spirit to bring wholeness and revelation to our wounded soul, as we minister to one another in the Spirit.

**Lesson 2. The Battle for the Mind – between fleshly & spiritual thinking:
May 3, 2005**

When dealing with a soul that, for whatever reason, there is a “Stronghold,” you will always be dealing with thoughts that are raised up against the knowledge of the Truth of God’s Word. These fortresses of thoughts, are composed of habitual ways of thinking and responding, that are comprised of ungodly and unscriptural thoughts, reasoning, and faulty conclusions, that precede the way we respond, in word, deed, or emotion.

The carnal/fleshly mind, that is not set on the Word and the revelation that comes from the Spirit of truth, is at enmity with God, for it is not subject, (under - & dependent upon) the Word of truth. Indeed, it cannot be.

Rom 8: 5-8 tells us that there are two types of mind-sets. Those who think on things based on the flesh, and those who think on things based on what is spiritual truth. One brings death, and the other brings life and peace.

Jam 4:8 tells us that a mind that is thinking like this is double-minded. Jam4:5 tells us that the Holy Spirit yearns over us with jealousy. He is jealous over us, and wants us to think on things above – spiritual things. Gal 5:16-18 Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. v.17 For the flesh warreth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh. These are contrary he one to the other: so that you cannot do the things that you would. (Another version: They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.) The flesh and the spirit are diametrically opposed to one another, as evidenced “by their works and their fruit.” 19-22

Jam 4:1 Fighting and quarreling come from carnal/fleshly desires, battling against spiritual desires. (Some of us are fighting within ourselves, as the fleshly desires, and wisdom of the world, that will help us fulfill those desires, clashes and differs with the spiritual man whose mind is set on things above, spiritual things that bring life and peace.) Rom 8:6

WALK OF FAITH

When we live under Grace and our spiritual journey is a walk of Faith, there are responses to God's Word, that must be adhered to, if we are to be set free by the truth of God's Word.

The following quote is from Neil Anderson: Freedom in Christ Bible notes. "The only appropriate response to a command in Scripture: Obey it! The only appropriate response to a promise in Scripture: Claim it! The only appropriate response to a Biblical fact or a declared truth in Scripture: Believe it!If Christ has triumphed over sin and death, then so too have we, because we are alive "in Christ." The defeated Christian tries to put the old self to death, but can't do so. Why? Because he or she is already dead! It is false reasoning to ask, *what experience must we have in order for this to be true?* The only experience that was required occurred 2,000 years ago, and the only way we can enter into that experience, is by faith. We cannot do for ourselves what Christ has already done for us. We don't make anything true by our experience, and any effort to do so, will prove fruitless. We believe that what God has done and said is true. When we choose to believe God and live accordingly, by faith, this truth becomes evident in our experience. We don't do good things and hope that someday God will love us. God loves us now, and because of His love, we do the good things that we do.Counting ourselves dead to sin, does not make us dead to sin. We are dead to sin, because of the crucifixion, and our new life in Christ. As we continue to believe this truth, it will progressively become evident in our experience. When we are tempted to sin, we can say, 'I am alive in Christ, and sin is not longer my master'."

Rom 6:3-8 We were immersed into Christ's death, and raised up in resurrection power to walk in newness of life.

When looking at Romans 7, we can see that although the law points out sin that dwells in us, it has no power to deliver us from the things that we see are wrong and determine not to do. All through chapter 7, we see that just making a determination not to sin, is not enough to keep our flesh from sinning. Apart from death, burial, and resurrection in Christ, whereby we are raised to walk in newness of life, and therefore free from the bondage of sin, we cannot see that something is wrong, determine not to do it, and end up as one who has overcome the power of sin within our flesh. The only way that sin loses its power over us, is when we see ourselves dead to it, because we are “in Christ”. When we, “by faith” consider ourselves dead to sin, and alive to Christ, we will begin to experience the fruit of one who has been circumcised by the circumcision of Christ, Who stripped us of our old sinful and carnal nature. Col 2:11

We are positionally Sanctified, when we are put into Christ,” at the time that we are born again, (1 Cor 1:30) but we are progressively consecrated and sanctified, as referred to in Eph 4:-17-24, where we are told to put off the old self. We are also told in Col 3:10-15 to put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. NIV 2 Pet 1:2-4 reiterated that in the knowledge of God and the Lord Jesus Christ, grace and peace will be ours, together with very great and precious promises that make us partakers of His divine nature.

Remember that we will only know this, as we behold in the mirror of God’s Word, what those great truths and promises are, for us as believers, and receive these truths and promises personally for ourselves, “by faith” and not by what we are experiencing.

2 Cor 3:18 This is what enables us to see ourselves as those who are no longer sinners, but as those who are dead to sin.

**Rom 7:17 As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature.
v. 20 Now is I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who does it, but sin that dwells in me.**

Romans 6 tells us we are dead to sin, then in Romans 7, we see that sin is dwelling in the flesh, and obeying the law cannot remove it from us, but in Romans 8, we get the good news that we are not condemned to live under

the law of sin and death, for there is a GREATER SPIRITUAL LAW, and “by faith” it operates in us to put us into the law of the Spirit of Life that is in Christ Jesus.

Bible Notation: Freedom in Christ Bible: “When theologians talk about guilt, they are talking about an objective deviation from an ethical standard, not a feeling. To feel guilt and to be guilty are not the same thing. Apart from Christ, we all stand guilty before the law, whether we know and feel the reality of our guilt or not. The law is God’s ethical standard, but the law could not be kept by any of us, because we were “weakened by the sinful nature.” (Romans 8:3) Therefore, we all stood condemned by the law. According to the gospel, Jesus came in our likeness and became a sin offering so that “the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us” (v.4) “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (v 1). As Children of God, we have been justified by faith see (Rom 5:1). We are no longer guilty before God, because we are no longer under the law, but under grace (Rom 6:14. God will not condemn us, because Christ has met God’s righteous demands. Because of our position in Christ, we are to consider ourselves “dead to sin, but alive to God, in Christ Jesus” (v.11) Death brings the end of a relationship, not the end of existence. We are now rightly related to God. We no longer belong to the kingdom of darkness. We are in Christ, and the law of life in Christ has “set us free from the law of sin and death (8:2). The law of sin and death however is still operative, because we cannot do away with the law. Sin is still appealing and powerful, and physical death is still imminent for all of us. How, then, can we be free from it? Jesus didn’t do away with the law of sin and death; Jesus overcame that law with a greater law – “the law of the Spirit of life” (v 2).”

The illustration of flying against the law of gravity explains this principle.

“So it is for believers “in Christ.” Believers must walk in faith and have hope in Christ’s overcoming power. Though physical death is imminent, we know we will continue to live spiritually, even after we die physically (see John 11:25-26). We will be tempted to sin, but when sin makes an appeal, we can say, “ I don’t have to sin.” If we do sin, we have a defender in Jesus Christ (see 1 Jn 2-1-2). And though we have an adversary who accuses us day and night before God (see Rev 12:10), we can say with confidence, “There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Rom 8:1)!

We see, that even though these truths are ours, as we walk in faith the life of one who is “In Christ,” Jam4:1-4 There are some who are still warring within themselves, and they have also left their first love and His way of thinking, believing, and responding, and are having an illicit affair with the world. They follow after idols, and this results in estrangement and hostility with God. James calls them adulterers and adulteresses, but he is speaking in a metamorphic term, that refers to the Old Testament, when the people of God broke their vows to love and serve Him, and went whoring after other gods. James goes on to imply that having an illicit affair with the world, will result in a damaged relationship with your God. V. 8 Indicates that it is a double minded man that attempts to hold onto the world and God at the same time.

Neil Anderson notes on James 4:1-12

“James clearly reveals the ongoing battle that we have with the flesh, (see v.1-3) the world, (see vs 4-6) and the devil (see v. 7). To resolve these personal and spiritual conflicts, we need to draw near to God and repent of our old, wicked ways. If we try to resist the devil without first submitting to God, we are attempting to set ourselves free by our own strength and resources. In the flesh, we are no match for satan. On the other hand, we can submit to God, but not resist the devil, in which case we will remain in bondage. The critical issue is our relationship with God.”

We cannot know how to submit to God and resist the devil, if our wisdom is still that which we have received from worldly experience and training, because wisdom is either earthly/wordly/from a fleshly – carnal mind or

it is from above – the mind of God – speaking to our spirit mind – the mind of Christ. The wisdom of this world is corrupted, but the wisdom that God gives us, is wisdom that is pure and not defiled by the flesh or the worldly way of thinking.

Note Col 2:1-8 regarding being deceived by the traditions and philosophies of man.

The Lord gave me this thought regarding strongholds: Strongholds are satan’s way of keeping us from walking in the Spirit, being the person that we are “In Christ,” and walking the “faith walk.”

STRONGHOLDS that are mean to DIVERT from way of LIFE:
3rd Lesson May 10th, 2005

As the Lord showed us last week, satan loves to erect strongholds in our lives, in order to keep us from: “walking in the Spirit”, knowing and accepting who we are “in Christ,” who we are as a “child of God,” and to be a hindrance to a Christian “walking the faith walk.”

STRONGHOLDS BUILT BY RELIGION

One of the ways that satan builds stronghold in our heart is through religious training and life experiences. He will do all in his power to use the traditions and dogmas of religion, and manmade doctrines espoused by religious sects and denominations, to divert us from “*The way of Life*.” The enemy doesn’t care how much of the Word we know and try to keep in our own strength, as long as he can cause us to be independent and thereby distracted from a personal relationship with and dependence upon the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. As long as we are trying to walk in what our soul has been taught as the knowledge of good and evil, we will become task/performance oriented people and not those whose first love and desire is relationship and intimacy with our Father, our Savior, and the precious Holy Spirit.

I want to emphasize that this is not a thing that the deceived or uninformed person is purposely doing, but in our effort to please our heavenly Father, we who do not realize that He already sees us spotless and blameless in His love, will strive to work for His approval and acceptance. Religion has told us, that if we are going to convince God of how much we love Him and appreciate His sacrifice for us, we will have to prove it by what we give up and what we do. Those who believe this lie become focused on themselves and what they do and what they don't do. In an effort to please God, they often miss the truth that God is pleased when we believe Him and put our faith in Christ, His crucified Son.

(Heb 11:6 Jn 6:28-29 1 Jn 3:23)

**{Eph 1:4 For He (Father God) has chosen us in Christ
before the foundation of the world, to be holy
and blameless before Him IN LOVE.}**

Our faith in Christ pleases God, and because we are born again, God sees us "in Christ" as righteous and blameless IN LOVE. Those who can't believe and RECEIVE THIS AS A PERSONAL TRUTH FOR THEMSELVES, will never be able to escape the religious stronghold of good works and self sacrifice that is born of a desire to make themselves acceptable to God, by what they do and how they act. No matter how hard they try, it will never be enough, and because they see their works as what is able to satisfy God, they realize that they must be perfect. This makes them godlike, because they become their own savior, and gods must never make a mistake. Thus, they are always striving, yet never satisfied with what they do.

Because they aren't pleased with themselves, they think that they fall short in God's eyes, so they never feel loved and accepted by Him. They oppose themselves, because in their hyperactive works oriented mindset, they are always weighed in the balance and found wanting. They see themselves as unworthy, having failed to live up to their religious standards, and so it stands to reason, they have not been pleasing and acceptable to God either.

This is the scenario of one of satan's favorite snares - the religious trap of "being good and doing good works, so that God will approve of you and accept you." The power of this belief is pointed out in Galatians 3:1, when Paul compares it to being under a spell of witchcraft. In Galatians 2:21 he

plainly told them that he would not nullify the **GRACE OF GOD**, by trying to become righteous, by doing all the right things in the keeping of the law, for if he could have become righteous on the merit of doing the right things, according to the law, then Christ died in vain, and His death was not necessary for salvation.

In Paul's letter to the Phillipians, he warns the church at Phillipi, which was a Roman colony, who took pride in their Roman citizenship, that it was not their identity as Romans that qualified them, but their identity in Christ that gave them their citizenship in heaven and their place in God's family. In the third chapter, he lets them know that there are those who would come in to undermine their position in Christ, that they had obtained "by faith," and they would try to put them under the tradition Hebrew law. He let them know by his personal testimony that if keeping the law made one righteous, Paul would have been qualified. He told them to put no confidence in what they could do in the flesh, but to worship God in Spirit and rejoice in Christ Jesus.

If being born in the right bloodline and doing everything right, would qualify him, then Paul would have been righteous and acceptable to God, but Paul turned from all of that rather than refuse the Grace of God that He received, when he put his faith in Christ's death and was saved by grace through faith in what Christ had done at Calvary.

Think of the pressure that one puts upon themselves, if they don't recognize the efficacy of God's grace and Christ's death. They will have to perform enough good works and live a life so perfectly that they will measure up to the standard that they have set for themselves to be qualified to receive God's love and approval. (see Eph 2:8 Col 1:12 Rom 5:1 & v. 17)

Jesus said in Mat 7:13 "Enter through the NARROW GATE, for wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.

Self righteousness that comes from having to conform to religious rules, traditions, and manmade standards is a broad road that leads to destruction.

If we could have been saved by keeping the law, Christ would not have died in our place – taking our sin upon Himself and giving us the gift of His righteousness.

satan wants to see to it that we don't find that narrow gate, or if one does come through the narrow gate of salvation in Christ, then he will try to divert us into any destructive way that will keep us from the *narrow way of life, truth, liberty, and maturity*.

The following illustration by Neil Anderson, is a picture of how satan uses temptation and accusation and condemnation to build a stronghold in the soul of one who does not know their true identity "In Christ."

Pg 1086 of Freedom In Christ's NIV Bible – note by Neil Anderson:

"Jesus said that only a few will enter through the narrow gate and walk along the narrow path that leads to life. The Christian path is like a small mountain road with a steep cliff on one side and a roaring forest fire on the other. The devil tempts us to jump off of the steep cliff, the way of license. Imagine the exhilaration of sailing off that cliff. It looks good – if it didn't, we wouldn't be tempted by it – but it results in death.

There are also a number of paths that lead to the roaring forest fire, the way of legalism. Those paths lead to flames of condemnation. "Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence" (Col 2:23). Remember, that the law kills, but the Spirit gives life (see 2 Cor 3:6).

All the sanctuary we need is right ahead of us, and the Holy Spirit will lead us there. Our sanctuary is not a building, however; our sanctuary is our position in Christ. The tempter will say, "Go ahead and do it. You know you want to. Everybody is doing it. You'll get away with it." But if we give in to the tempter, he immediately changes roles and becomes the accuser, saying, "How can you call yourself a Christian? You will never get away with it." The struggle going on in our mind is similar to taking a walk along a narrow street that leads to a door through which we can see Jesus. Buildings line the narrow street, and people pop their heads out of doors and windows, tempt-

ing us and accusing us, saying, “You don’t believe this religious garbage do you? Come on in with the rest of us and have a good time.” Defeated Christians pay attention to these voices. They believe the lies and readily give in to the temptations. Then they sit in the street, their progress toward Christ stopped and His voice drowned out by the voices of the deceivers. Less defeated Christians think they are fighting the good fight by dialoguing with the voices. They reply, “No, you’re not going to entice me. That’s not true. You can’t accuse me.” The problem is, they are letting the devil set the agenda. They are standing in the street, but they aren’t making any progress toward Christ.

Victorious Christians fix their eyes on Jesus and keep walking by faith in the power of the Holy Spirit. They don’t pay attention to deceiving spirits and will not be distracted by them. At first the battle for the mind is intense, but as they continue walking by faith, the narrow path gets broader and broader, and the mental assault becomes less and less as they draw closer to Christ.” End of quote from Neil Anderson’s commentary.

My comment:

God’s way of life is narrow and never changes, but as we grow in our relationship to the Lord and the knowledge of His Word, we may find that our perception of what is narrow has been greatly revised. I think that in those instances, when we choose the *high road, of who we are in Christ and the truth about what the Word of God says about us*, it now seems the broader way to life and blessing, and we don’t see it as the “*narrow – less fulfilling – deprived of fun and joy way*” any longer. God’s narrow road of life and blessing has not changed, but our perspective of it has broadened and deepened into life and peace for our soul. (Rom 8:5-6)

Self imposed “do nots,” lack the power to control fleshly sins and instead tend to put us back under the works of the law – and thus under the curse. (Gal 3:1-14 Col 2:23) Only abiding in Christ and producing the fruit of the Spirit, will lead us in paths of righteousness. The religious rules and rituals are counterfeits to being led by the Spirit.

If Christ is our Sanctuary – the refuge that we are seeking, then it is the enemy’s job to see that we get diverted while we are on the way to that safe house – that abiding place – “In Christ.” If we reach the Father’s protection, and by faith are abiding in Christ, this is the place of power and fruitfulness in the kingdom, and defeat for the power of darkness that is assigned to kill, steal, and destroy. That gives the enemy a great incentive to form weapons that will sabotage our position in Christ, Who is our refuge and fortress. The devil, therefore, sends his deceptive snares and spiritual workers to build a stronghold that imprisons us. In reality, it is only a fortress of lies, false impressions, and belief systems, that are based on unscriptural thoughts and speculations that are exalted against the truth about: God, ourselves, and the truth of God’s Word.

Every lie we believe is a bar that makes a spiritual prison to hold us in bondage, but it only takes one truth to be the key to set us free. As we receive revelation from the Holy Spirit, and believe it in our heart as God’s provision for us personally, it has the power within it to open the door to our mental and emotional prison and set the captive free.

It is hard to believe, but there are prisoners who desire to be in the prison that life and lies has built around them, rather than face the discomfort and risk of freedom that they will have to walk in, once they leave the confines of their cell. Once free, they will be responsible to walk in the liberty, where-with Christ has set them free, and not submit again to the yoke of bondage. Some prefer not to be responsible, but to be passively responsive to a set of laws, that they can mindlessly follow, without searching, digging, feeling, and being personally responsible to receive truth and walk in obedience and dependence upon it and the power of the Holy Spirit, Who is there to help them in this pilgrimage.

One of the main portions of any stronghold is the framework of doubt and unbelief. Just as truth mixed with faith is a requirement for freedom, so are lies and deception that when rooted and grounded in our minds, grow into pillars of doubt and unbelief.

If we are saved by hearing truth, and receiving it by faith, which gives us access to the grace of God which saves us, then so are we in bondage, when we hear the lies of the devil, and allow it to bear the fruit of unbelief, producing the idolatry of self righteousness and the keeping of the law and rituals of religion. This will open us up to the curse of keeping the whole law and following all of the traditions and commandments of religion. Once works, religious activity, and self effort are the standard for right standing with God, this builds a high place in our minds that is exalted against the true worship of the God of truth, grace, and salvation.

**Mental Strongholds: Notes by Neil Anderson pg 1338 NIV (FIC Bible):
2 Corinthians 10:1-5**

“The imagery Paul uses in 2 Corinthians 10:1-5 is not that of defensive armor; it is the imagery of the offensive weaponry of a battering ram. Rather than use the conventional weapons of this world to tear down strongholds, we use divine weapons that are at the disposal of every believer. These strongholds are not physical barriers that fortify a city. These are mental strongholds that are raised up against the knowledge of God. We can tear them down because we have the “mind of Christ.” (1 Cor 2:16) and the Spirit of truth within us.

Research has shown that attitudes and beliefs are formed very early in childhood. Because we are not physically born with the presence of God in our lives, our mental attitudes are assimilated from the environment in which we are raised. This assimilation occurs in two primary ways. First, attitudes and beliefs are assimilated in our minds through prevailing experiences, such as the home we are raised in, the schools we attend, and the neighborhoods we play in. The values and attitudes are more caught than taught. Because children don’t respond the same way to a particular environment, every child’s mental attitude is different. Second, mental strongholds are developed through traumatic experiences, such as the death of a parent, divorce in the home, or various kinds of mental and physical abuse.

Strongholds are habitual mental patterns of thought. They are memory traces that are burned into our minds over time or by the intensity of the traumatic experience. Strongholds are essentially the same as defensive mechanisms, and they always reveal themselves in a temperament that is

less than Christlike. Strongholds are formed in our minds like deep tire tracks in a wet pasture. After the ruts have been established over time, the driver doesn't even have to steer in order to stay on the path. In fact, any attempt to steer out of the ruts is met with resistance. Choosing the wrong path for six weeks will establish a habit, and if that habit persists, a stronghold will form.

An inferiority complex is a stronghold. Nobody is born inferior to another person, but in this competitive world it is almost impossible not to feel inferior to someone who is smarter, faster, stronger, or prettier. Negative self-perception can only be torn down in Christ. In the kingdom of God, each person has equal value. God loves each of His children the same, and we are not in competition with one another.

Being an adult child of an alcoholic is a stronghold. Suppose an alcoholic mother has three sons. The eldest son chooses to stand up to his mother when she comes home drunk. The middle son accommodates his mother. The youngest son runs and hides. Twenty years later, the mother is long gone, but when the three sons are confronted by a horrible situation, it is probable that the eldest son will fight, the middle son will accommodate, and the youngest son will run and hide. Mental strongholds are learned over time as we interact with our environment, but they can be torn down in Christ.

If we have been trained wrongly, can we be retrained? If we have believed a lie, can we now choose to believe the truth? If we have programmed our minds wrongly, can we be reprogrammed? Of course! *we are transformed by the renewing of our minds, and we win the spiritual battle when "we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ"*(2 Cor 10:5). Now if we have a thought that is contrary to God's Word, we can simply dismiss it and stay obedient to Christ." {End of Quote by Neil Anderson}

MY COMMENT:

As the Holy Spirit uses the Word of God to give us a revelation of a stronghold in our thoughts and emotions, we have the choice of whether or not to be proactive and: (1) {renounce the lies that the Word of God exposes}, and (2) {take our thoughts captive to the obedience of Christ, as we acknowledge the revealed truth the Lord has given us} OR we can remain in a prison of lies and emotional pain, by being passively inactive and under the power of the deception of the enemy.

Deut 30:19-20 This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the Lord your God, listen to His voice, and hold fast to Him. For the Lord your God is your life, and He will give you many years in the land He swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Neil's note on: 2 Timothy 2:25-26 NIV FIC Bible:

We must be dependent on God, because He is the One Who grants repentance that leads to a knowledge of the truth that sets the captives free. As captives believe the truth, "they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will."

KJV of 2 Tim 2:25-26 ...instructing those that oppose themselves: if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.

- 1. Receive instruction**
- 2. Seek God to help you to repent**
- 3. Acknowledge the truth, after you have come to your senses**
- 4. After repentance and acknowledging the truth, resist the enemy that has taken you captive, and with spiritual authority command it to leave you in Jesus' name.**

Jam 4:7 Submit yourselves to God, resist the devil, and he will flee.

Notes for May 17, 2005

Jeremiah 29:11

NIV For I know the plans I have for you, “declares the Lord,” plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.
NAS For I know the plans that I have for you, ‘declares the Lord,’ plans for welfare and not for calamity, to give you a future and a hope.
Ampl. For I know the thoughts and plans that I have for you, says the Lord, thoughts and plans for welfare and peace and not for evil, to give you hope in your final outcome.

Actually, in Jer 29:11, the KJV, using the word “thoughts” is the word that is used in “Strong’s Concordance,” for Jer 29:11. The word *plans* is not listed one time, in either the Old or New Testament in “Strong’s.”

KJV Jer. 29:11 says: For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil. to give you an expected end.

THOUGHTS – Heb: = A contrivance i.e. a texture, machine, intention, plan as in: Jer 29:11 plan<whether bad = a plot; or good = advise>. cunning (work) devise, devised; imagination, invented, means, purpose, thought.

This word thought is used in:

Gen 6: 5 And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the THOUGHTS of his heart was only evil continually.

Amplified: The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination and intention of all human thinking was only evil continually.

Compare to: Rom 1:25 For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature, rather than the CREATOR, Who is blessed forever.

v. 28 And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper. **NAS version**

Ampl. v. 28 And so, since they did not see fit to acknowledge God or approve

of Him or consider Him worth the knowing, God gave them over to a base and condemned mind, to do things not proper or decent, but loathsome, v. 29 until they were filled (permeated and saturated) with every kind of unrighteousness and iniquity.....

The THOUGHTS of unredeemed man, left to the influence of the world, the flesh and the devil, were no different in the Genesis of the Old Testament than they were in Romans of the New Testament. Thoughts that are not subject to the Father of lights and the Word of truth, will lead us into darkness and will come under the continual assault of the devil. Without a revelation truth, even those who believe in Christ, will have to battle the thoughts against God and self, that come to build up a stronghold that will put a veil over our heart and mind against the truth that will set us free to walk in victory and maturity.

In Acts 20:27 Amplified, before Paul was to leave for his journey to Jerusalem, he sent to Ephesus for the elders of the church to come to him at Miletus. When they arrived, Paul told them that he was clean, innocent, and not responsible for the blood of any of them.

“For I never shrank or kept back or fell short from declaring to you the whole purpose, and plan and counsel of God.”vss 28-32 “Take care and be on guard for yourselves and the whole flock over which the Holy Spirit has appointed you bishops and guardians, to shepherd (tend and feed guide) the church of the Lord or of God, which He obtained for Himself {buying it and saving it for Himself }, with His own blood. I know that after I am gone, ferocious wolves will get in among you, not sparing the flock. Even from your own selves, men will come to the front, who by saying perverse (distorted and corrupt) things, will endeavor to draw away the disciples after them {to their own party}. Therefore, be always alert and on your guard, being mindful that for three years, I never stopped night or day seriously to admonish and advise and exhort you one by one, with tears. And now, (brethren), I commit you to God {I deposit you in His charge, entrusting you to His protection and care}. And I commend you to the Word of His grace { to the commands and counsels and promises of His unmerited favor }. It is able to build you up and to give you {your rightful} inheritance among all God’s set-apart ones (those consecrated, purified, and transformed of soul).”

After this exhortation, Paul said a tearful goodbye to his precious friends from Ephesus, because he knew and had told them, that he would not see them again. He knew in his spirit that they would see his face no more on this earth.

Since this was his last opportunity to speak to them, he reminded them that He had revealed to them the full PURPOSE, PLAN, AND COUNSEL of God.

In the NIV version of the Bible, Acts 20:27 says that he had proclaimed the whole will of God to them.

NASthe whole purpose of God.

KJVto declare unto you all the counsel of God.

COUNSEL *Grk* = is from the root word (will) minded, or intend, be disposed be willing. It's definition is: Counsel 1012 Strong's = from volition, i.e. advise, or purpose, counsel, will.

Counsel used:

Eph 1:11 Ampl. In Him we also were made [God's] heritage (portion) and we obtained an inheritance; for we had been foreordained (chosen and appointed beforehand) in accordance with His purpose, Who works out everything in agreement with the counsel and design of His (own) will.

{Note: the words – purpose, counsel, design, and will} all referring to God's plan and what His will was for those who were made His heirs.

He had a plan for Israel in Jer 29:11, and He had a plan for His children in the New Testament, according to His intent, counsel, purpose, and will.

It was always for our EVENTUAL GOOD. There were times that the enemy would try to stop God's plan and thwart His will and purpose, but God is the Lord God almighty and He has thoughts and plans for us that are for our good and to bless us with an intended hope and future that was conceived in His heart of love and planned in His mind to succeed above all obstacles and tactics and wiles of the devil.

What God has planned for good, the devil schemes to divert, hinder, delay, and destroy. We need to be those who are believing in the good plans of God, and in His ability to watch over His plans to bring them about.

As He did with Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebeckah, Joseph from Egypt, and Moses from the desert --- David from the sheep folds to the palace, and Jesus from a stable to the throne for the King of Kings and Lord of Lords at His right hand, so He has plans for each and every one of His children. Plans for good and not for evil. Plans to prosper them and give them His intended hope for their future.

Strongholds are set up early in the mind of the devil who schemes, and plots for ways to steal, kill, and destroy the plans of God in our individual lives.

In many instances, these plans were started generations ago, and have continued their destructive pattern through many households. They are propogated by words, actions, and thoughts that are against the knowledge of God and against who we are as children of God.

There are weapons that are mighty through God, that will pull these strongholds down, but many of God's children don't have the weapons, or don't know how to use them. Many have the weapons, yet because of fear, weariness, woundedness, and discouragement are not using them. We need to be close at hand to strengthen each other and exhort one another to love and good deeds. Heb 10:23-24

DEFINITIONS

The Hebrew definition of THOUGHTS in Jer 29:11, led me to look up the different words used in Strong's Concordance for the meaning of *thoughts* in the Hebrew.

Webster's 1828 Dictionary:

Contrivance: The act of inventing, devising, or planning. A scheme, plan, or plot. **To Contrive:** To invent, to devise, to plan, to form or design.

Intention: Primarily a stretching or bending of the mind toward an object. hence, uncommon exertion towards an object; fixedness of attention; earnestness. By design, on purpose, the fixed direction of the mind to a particular object or a determination to act in a particular manner, it is my intention to proceed to: End or aim, the object to be accomplished. (Intentional: intended, designed, done with design or purpose. The act was intentional, not accidental).

(My note: As Jesus stedfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem. Later, Paul did the same thing [see Acts 21:23-24].

Plan: A scheme devised, a project, the form of something to be done.
Existing in the mind, expressed in words or committed to writing – a representation of any intended work.

To Devise: to form in design; as to plan the conquest of a country.

NEW TESTAMENT:

Counsel (as in Acts 20:27) from root “will” minded, intend, be disposed, be willing. Counsel in Strongs = 1012 from volition, i.e. advice, or purpose; advise, counsel, will.

Used in: Eph 1:11 Heb 6:17 Acts 2:23, 4:28, 5:33 & 38, 20:27

THOUGHTS - Heb 4:284 see page 18 of this outline for definition.

used in: Gen 6:5 Jud 5:15, 1 Chron 28:9 Psa 10:4 33:11 40:5*
Psa 56:5*** 92:5 94:11 & 19 119:113 139:17-18 & 23 (146:4 Ampl)
Pro 12:5 15:26 16:3***** 21:5**

Isa 55:7 Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return to the Lord.....v. 8 For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways, says the Lord. v. 9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts.

The thoughts (contrivance, intention, plan, advice, devise, imagination, invented, purpose) of the Lord are what precedes from His heart, His mouth, and His hand that are a declaration to us of His ways, His character, and His works. Because His thoughts are as different from ours as the distance between heaven and earth, unless we line our thoughts up with His thoughts, we will never fulfill His plan, purpose, and counsel in word, deed, or character.

The thoughts of a STRONGHOLD are intended to come against the thoughts and ways of God. All of the imaginations and speculations that come from “stronghold thinking” will be against the thoughts and knowledge of God, His will, His purpose, His plan, and His ways. They will be against the true knowledge of God’s will for us and against the true knowledge about us as children of God, Whose plans are specific in design to give each of us an intended future with hope and blessing.

Isaiah 59:5 (note the whole chapter describes their injustices and sins).

Isa 65:2 I have spread out my hands all the day long to a rebellious people, who walk in a way that is not good, after their own *thoughts*.

**Jer 4:14.....wash your heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved.
How long shall your iniquitous and grossly offensive thoughts lodge within you?**

Jer 6:19even the *fruit of their thoughts*, because they have not listened to *MY WORDS...but have rejected them*.