

Freedom From Fear And Torment

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There are some things that only time and experience add to a man's life— things he is unwilling or unable to learn any other way until he is ready to listen. The times that God has allowed me to see myself through His eyes have always been the hardest because they have been difficult times of change. Through the years, though, I have watched my motives change and have discovered how strong the love of God truly is. I have also come to realize that fear and torment are such destructive forces that they could be easily classified as the right and left hand of the devil.

As a rule, people do not know how to walk free from fear and torment because they have been conditioned by them. It is just like a baby elephant being tethered to a stake when he is first born in captivity. As a baby, he tests the bindings many times to free himself, but to no avail. Finally, he gives up. When the elephant is fully grown with massive tons of muscle behind him, he is still unable to break the bindings. It is not because he is not strong enough, and it is not because of the bindings that are holding him captive: It is the stronghold in his mind. He does not understand that HE CAN BE FREE! All he has ever known is captivity, and the bindings that held him as a baby still hold him in his mind.

That is how so many of us are when it comes to the blessings of God. We have strongholds built into our minds that somehow set limits on how much we can be blessed.

The first level of deception is when Satan convinces us that our problem is a natural one, based on a job, the economy, or our surroundings, and not a spiritual one. In so doing, the devil successfully convinces us that the Word works, but only if the conditions are right. So instead of looking at the problem as a spiritual one, we see it as a natural one. We fail to see the need for pulling down the strongholds in our minds and replacing them with godly strongholds found in God's Word.

Our enemy, Satan, is a master at deception, and we would not be the first believers in the history of the Body of Christ to be affected in this way. It just seems too improbable to believe our real prison is the way we think. Getting free of our problems by changing the way we think seems too absurd, too simple.

I can almost hear the devil say, "Are you so stupid as to believe that your problem is as simple as this? Look around you; things are bad!"

Do not be deceived by the devil. Jesus said in Mark 9:23: *All things are possible to him that believeth.* If you can change the way you think, you can change the way you believe. If you will let me, I can help teach you how to pull down the strongholds in this area of thinking and replace them with God's way of believing.

First of all, we should not be so foolish as to believe these strongholds do not exist. Second Corinthians 10:3-5 says: *For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of*

strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;

In the fourth verse, it says these strongholds (prisons) are so powerful, it would take a weapon of God to pull them down. I used to wonder what kind of prison could be so strong that it would take a WEAPON OF GOD to pull it down. I did not have to go far to find my answer. The fifth verse says: *Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God*

In its most basic definition, a stronghold is the way a person thinks; it is a teaching or a circumstance or a way of life that is so strong, it has become a part of him and he has become a part of it.

It's easy to understand strongholds in the light of the devil's work, but the opposite is also true when it comes to the blessings of God. Jesus said in John 15:7: *If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.* Same principle, but this time, we are talking about a stronghold of faith! So in casting down imaginations (strongholds), we need to realize that an imagination consists of much more than just the way we think. It is actually a system of thoughts that has taken root in our soul and draws on its power to keep us from rising above our emotions.

I knew a minister once who has since gone home to be with the Lord. He was a sincere man who loved God and people. He had a good ministry, but I noticed from the comments he made, he had a problem with giving. It came out later that he had suffered greatly during the Great Depression, so much so that his experience left a stronghold in his life. Every time the subject of giving was approached, his emotions, which were born in those horrible years of lack, would rise up and take him over with such force that a negative attitude would visibly manifest itself. In fact, it looked as though he came up against an invisible wall as he panicked at the thought of turning loose of the money that had become his security.

He would reason away the act of giving by saying things like, "People give to my ministry to carry on the work of the Kingdom of God, so why should I then turn around and give the money that God gave me to some other ministry for their work?"

Although I did not understand then as much as I do now, I know that when dealing with the casting down of imaginations, it is not just the reasonings that have to be dealt with, but also the emotions of the soul.

Today, psychology has a name for just about every spiritual condition people suffer from, especially those people who do not know Jesus, and in some cases, even people who do. When people have deep-rooted problems, psychology may not have the answers, but it does have the problems categorized: claustrophobia, "a fear of closed-in places"; homophobia, "feeling panic at the sight of blood"; arachnophobia, "a fear of spiders"; and so on.

When it comes to believers, Jesus paid the price for all of these fears and torments, from the smallest disorder to the most controlling of all strongholds. When one of these strongholds exists in the life of a believer, Paul made it very clear that it can be pulled down; every thought can be brought into obedience to Christ.

If a believer suffers from depression brought on by circumstances, or life has beaten him down to the point that nothing is left but a strong sense of self-preservation, or when suffering lack in the past has caused him to hold onto what he has for dear life, or when any fear or torment becomes a stronghold, that stronghold can be viewed as a container or a holding tank for emotions.

For example, when the circumstances surrounding a person begin to threaten that stronghold, such as sitting in a service where people are being asked to give, these emotions come bursting out of his container with a vengeance. A defense mechanism will rise up between the believer and giving. This defense mechanism will bring him to the point of anger as his emotions bring him under subjection to the stronghold and keep him from giving. Even though a believer under such bondage may believe the Word and knows what God said about giving is true, he is still unable to control his emotions enough to give. He may sincerely want to, but he cannot without causing an emotional war.

The same thing is true of greed. Some people cannot get free from greed. The reason something like this is called a stronghold or a prison is because it has the power to keep people incarcerated. It holds them back from receiving the blessings and peace of God!

It is hard to say how many people fight emotional battles like this every day. They have been robbed of living in God's peace because they are not able to fully flow with His Spirit. Every time the Holy Spirit begins to prompt them to step out in faith and be led by the truth rather than their emotions, He runs right into their emotional strongholds. He is unable to move them forward in their spiritual walks because they are unable to obey Him.

When a person is caught up in a war between his own spirit (where God's nature dwells) and his flesh, a part of him wants to obey his spirit and a part does not. If he never does anything to strengthen the part that wants to obey, and never does anything to mortify the part that does not, then he will never win. Believe me, Satan will always be there to try to take advantage of every situation.

In order to pull down this kind of stronghold, a person needs to strengthen the part of himself that wants to obey and attack the part that does not. How? I'm so glad God has given us weapons that are mighty through God to tear down these strongholds!

The most important weapon that God gave us was the third Person of the Godhead to live inside of us. Then the Holy Spirit also equipped us with another vital weapon—a supernatural language. This language is a gift that edifies and builds us up above a carnal realm where our natural senses dominate. As we employ this gift by praying in tongues, the Holy Spirit begins the process of purging us of every "high thing" that exalts itself against God's plan for our lives.

The Holy Spirit begins a work of discerning the thoughts and intents of our hearts, exposing and rooting out systems of thought and soulish strongholds that cause us to fail. As we keep praying in tongues for personal edification, He tears down any strongholds of the soul that have not been constructed by God's Word. At the same time, the Holy Spirit builds godly strongholds in us by imparting revelation knowledge of God's Word, to mature us, to edify us, and to build our lives higher and higher into God.

The Word of God is a two-edged sword that divides asunder soul and spirit (Heb. 4:12). It is the only qualified agent to deliver such a distinct blow between spirit and soul. And in this purging process that encompasses all the realms of the soul and spirit, it is the only standard that can be trusted.

So it is essential for a person who is overcoming a stronghold to learn how to minister to his own soul with the Word of God. He must subject his senses and emotions to the Word which declares God's truth to the situation until everything has changed, until the control of the emotions has given way to a sense of peace and obedience. One of the most powerful ways to minister to your own soul and to get yourself ready to receive from God is to worship Him. This is why Ephesians 5:17-20 tells us: *Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;*

The reason Paul used this comparison, *Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;* was because he was trying to show us that in the same way a person's reasonings and emotions can be affected by alcohol, a person's reasonings and emotions can also be affected by being filled with the Holy Spirit.

An alcoholic drinks in order to escape having to deal with the problems and circumstances of life. He believes he is in control by simply keeping his feelings—his strongholds—sedated with alcohol. However, take away the alcohol and an emotional war will break out. He is completely dependent on alcohol to keep his emotions at bay just so he can function.

Paul tells us in Ephesians 5 that in the same way an alcoholic subjects himself completely to the numbing effects of alcohol, we can also subject ourselves completely to the power of the Holy Spirit. We must become filled with the Spirit in our mind, our will, our intellect, and our emotions, in other words, our whole soul.

As I shared earlier, we subject ourselves to the Holy Spirit and become filled by Him by filling ourselves with the Word of God. This is how we receive the strength to obey His promptings and leadership. We do this so that the Holy Spirit can rise up in our reasonings and emotions. We can become so filled with the way He thinks that we will begin to believe God's truth more than we do our strong feelings, which will free the Holy Spirit to pull down every stronghold, allowing us to flow in the blessings of God.

Knowing this, no matter how antagonistic our emotions become, no matter how loud our senses scream, we have to choose not to be moved by what we see, hear, or feel along the way. We must march our sense man to the woodshed and bring him under subjection to the Word of God until we are filled with the Spirit.

Going back to my original example, if I had a stronghold against giving like the minister who came through the Great Depression, I would begin to fight it by spending at least a half hour a day walking the floor, lifting my hands, and ministering to my own soul by calling myself free. I would worship God and praise Him over and over saying, "Jesus, I call myself free from the bondage and fear of self-preservation! Jesus, I call myself a giver; Jesus, I call

myself a giver."

Whatever my past experiences might be, I would find the scriptures that describe the victory over my problem and make spiritual songs out of them and minister to God with them in my private prayer closet over and over. "I worship You and praise You, Jesus. I am a giver because You have supplied all my need according to Your riches in glory."

It would not be very long that Jesus would become to you exactly what you are calling and believing Him to be.

Remember, you do not have to live in fear and torment. You do not have to let life's experiences, circumstances, or strongholds limit your ability to receive from God. You can change your outlook and circumstances by ministering to your own soul. Jesus said, If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed (John 8:36), and Jesus has indeed **MADE YOU FREE!**

Your friend and co-laborer,
Dave Roberson