



Outer Growth - strongholds

And he fortified the strongholds, and put captains in them, and store of victual, and of oil and wine.

2 Chronicles 11:11

Satan - 1 Chronicles 21:1

Think - Ezekiel 38:10, Proverbs 23:6, 7

Relatives - Matthew 10:36

Others - Luke 11:16

Negative - Ephesians 5:11

Group - Genesis 30:11

Harass - Luke 16:28

Objects - Acts 24:19

Lies - 1 Timothy 4:2

Divided - Mark 3:25

Steal - John 10:10

Now, if you are in a war and don't even know that you are even in a war, you are more than likely going to get wounded. And if you are in a war, and don't know who the enemy is, you are working at a terrible disadvantage. And if the enemy has a power base right in your front door and you are not even aware it is there, you are bound to be defeated. That is what Paul is dealing with in Second Corinthians, chapter ten (Paul is the author of Second Corinthians in which God by the Holy Spirit wrote Second Corinthians through him in the New Testament). In this passage, Paul deals with a problem that every Christian has to some degree at some point in time, and far too many Christians all of their life.

And that is "Satan's stronghold in their life."

There are five aspects of this, and the first one is to define what Paul means by a stronghold.

Second Corinthians ten, verse four states, "For

the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds." A stronghold in Greek is a fortified castle. When Paul talks about strongholds, he speaks about spiritual fortifications in our lives. In simple terms: A stronghold is a power base. It is a place of fortification. That is an area of weakness in our life or something we have not yielded to God. It is an area of weakness or an error in our thinking.

Satan is the father of all lies. And if Satan can get you to believe a lie about yourself, God, or someone else, he can take great advantage of that. But it is an area of weakness. Something that you may not have yielded to God, or it could be an area of misunderstanding, an error in our thinking that has made it possible for Satan to set up a stronghold.

An explanation is it can be some definite sin in your life. It can be a stronghold of jealousy. It can be a stronghold of greed, a fortress of lust, a fortress of resentment, or a fortress of bitterness. It can be a stronghold of rejection, a poor self-image, or low self-esteem. It can be a stronghold that can take on one or many forms, and there could be more than one. And you see in the area of weakness that Satan discovers in your life, Satan is not omniscient, he has tested and tried all of us so that he knows where and when we're the weakest and knows precisely when and how to hit us with that.

So if Satan gets a stronghold, an area that proves to be weak, he will do what every military strategist will do: discover the feeble spot and hit the enemy at that point. And if you hit them at that point and succeed, hit them again, hit them again, hit them again. That's why we discover those areas in our lives where Satan keeps harassing us in the very same place. He is succeeding, and why should he choose some other spot? So the stronghold can be an area of weakness that has developed or an error in our thinking: Erroneous thinking and allowing Satan to deceive us successfully can create a tremendous stronghold in our life.

The stronghold is a power base from which Satan begins to harass and destroy our entire life. What is Satan's design? He is the designer of it. What is Satan's ultimate

objective for getting a stronghold in your life? Some area from which he can foul up your life. Well, Satan's motivation drive is simple. Because when you begin to look to see how he brings us the past, he is the one who designs it. Satan looks at our life and sees the potential for God, and then he finds a weakness, an area that you have not yielded, an error in your thinking. At some point, the devil sees an area of defect you have not developed in your spiritual life, and he begins to focus on that. What is Satan's design in all that?

First of all, his design is to divide your mind. We all know if Satan harasses us in a particular area, or we discover some area of weakness that he begins to work on, that can divide our mind. For example, let's say you had a stronghold of jealousy. And maybe there is somebody in your life or somebody where you work, that somehow Satan just warped your attitude, and you may think that person is better than you are, you may think they are trying to get the best of you, you got all kinds of attitude about that person. Well, Satan can use that one stronghold in your life to divide your mind.

You think about something else, and that one person pops up in your mind. You are thinking about some plan you have and wonder, what if they will be there? And so Satan is continuously dividing your mind through that stronghold. Not only does he subdivide your mind, but a stronghold is a power base from which Satan harasses us. And here is what he does: he lies and attempts to discourage us. And then he says, "Look what you have done. Now you have gone and done it again. What do you think God thinks about you? Don't you know that God is ashamed of you? Don't you know that God is disappointed with you? Listen, that is the devil's lie. God is omniscient. He sees your whole life from beginning to end, inside and out. God knows your whole life perfectly: he knows what you're going to do. God already knows when you are going to blow it. He already knows when he is going to sin. God already knows when you are going to be obedient.

Satan is defeating us because he found and set up a power base, a stronghold, a fortification, and we are unaware of it. We

keep looking around and asking ourselves, why is Satan getting the best of us at that point? Because it is a spot we have not dealt with. So Satan keeps on working to discourage us, to disillusion us. How many people would say, "I don't think this Christian life works."

Why do some people think it does not work? "Well, I confess this, I read the Bible, I have been to revival meetings, I have been to Bible seminars, I have been to Bible conferences, I have been to Bible studies, I have been to Bible prayer groups, and I got the same old problem, and nothing works. "How many times have you told God that, "I promise on a stack of Bibles, I am not going to think this and do this anymore." And it did not even last thirty minutes? Because that is not the solution for you to get rid of strongholds, Satan is too clever. If it were that simple, he would come up with something new, and he does not even need to come up with anything new because he knows exactly how to defeat us.

A stronghold is a satanic power base that he moved into our lives, and he has taken advantage and deceived us into thinking that after all this is the devil's lie. Everybody has weaknesses, and that's the truth. In some areas of our lives, we have weaknesses: Some degree of weakness, not everybody the same. So everybody has weaknesses, everybody is going to sin, and you and I will never be perfect. So the devil lays the foundation of all that stuff. Then he might suggest, "You might as well just relax, and enjoy life and not try to be perfect, and not try to be righteous and try to be all those things because you are not going to be better than you are. Everybody is alike to some degree," the devil will tell us.

Satan would continue, relax." Or he will say to someone, "See, it is not working. You might as well quit reading the Bible and going through all this religious jargon because it is not working. The proof is to look at your life. You have prayed, begged, pleaded, cried, and it is not working, so forget it." However, we might be surprised by how many of God's people have said, "That's right, it just doesn't work." Backslide on God, and they are not happy. They are more miserable than when they were

trying in being defeated. "Why should I keep on trying if it doesn't work? I don't have time for any more burdens in the Christian life." And Satan is just rejoicing himself because he is telling lies, and we accept them. Anytime believers feel God condemns them, they believe the devil's lie. Because God has never convicted any of His children, that is purely from the devil.

Satan designs that stronghold, and he moves into our lives on a given weakness. And what does he do? It evolves from there until it overflows in every aspect of your life.

The third thing we should notice is how a stronghold develops in a person's life. There are two ways they grow: the first one is involuntary, and the second is voluntary. First, examine the involuntary one: an involuntary stronghold is the result, a power base that Satan gets into our lives. It is not of something we have chosen or done but of something preprogrammed into our thinking. It may be from our childhood, our parents, or the people we have associated with, and maybe later on in life, but thoughts feed into our minds: And as we begin to think these things or whatever they may be, sometimes Satan can get a power base.

For example, if you grew up in a home where your parents did not get along, your brothers and sisters fought and fussed all the time, and you were the object of continuous criticism all the time. Until you came along in the mature age and may have felt, "I'm no good, never can do anything, never will succeed in life, I'll never get the breaks in life." And so you live in the negative case all the time. Satan will take advantage of what enters your mind back then involuntarily, the things you learned about yourself.

They were lies told to you by the devil. They were lies told to you by somebody else, but Satan took advantage of somebody else's poor training, injected them into your mind, took that little tiny foothold, and built on it all of your life. Some people have tremendous potential: you can see it on the inside once they begin to talk. But at first, they are all like this, "I will never be able to amount to anything. I'll never succeed in life, I'll never get the breaks, things don't come my way." They

live almost as if they were emotionally deformed, can't quite straighten up and face life, and believe that God can do something in their life.

Satan will take advantage of what parents say to their children and set up a stronghold that can defeat them all their lives. Live a defeated life because of the lie Satan has injected into their mind, "You'll never amount to anything, you will never make it in life, you probably end up in prison."

If you look back into your life and think about a stronghold even today that Satan may have in your life, where did it come from? Is it something that somebody fed into your mind that you began to believe? Maybe an attitude in your life has been a problem all of your life. What about the voluntary way? How does a stronghold develop in our lives where we are primarily responsible? All of us are responsible for the strongholds in our lives. It may be a stronghold of doubt, a stronghold of fear that somehow you are always going to fear the worst is going to happen. Maybe you can't believe in people, or you can't believe in God and expect the worst to happen, and somehow you can't get it together. And when you put all the pieces to life together, somehow never quite fits.

However, we try to figure out why they don't quite fit. In the same way, the stronghold of fear, the stronghold of doubt. Well, how does this develop voluntarily? When you and I deliberately violate the law of God, we deliberately sin against God. We may think, "Well, you know one sin will not hurt anybody? I mean, a little bit of iniquity will not hurt anybody. So we say. That is what the devil tells us, and once in a while, we believe that. Well, a young person comes along and says, "Look, you know, I want to be a Christian, but I am going to wait until I get to be about twenty-five. When I reach that age, I will turn over my lie to God." Satan can get a foothold in your life as an unbeliever, even after salvation. Unless you understand what is happening, Satan will come back and establish that foothold and that stronghold in your life and harass you even as a believer every day of your Christian life unless you can identify, see what is happening, and learn how to deal with it.

So, hear what happens, how does it start?

This is the way it starts. First of all, it starts with a thought. Every stronghold begins with thinking. It may be a thought of greed, jealousy, lust, or whatever, but it starts with the thought.

The thought moves into consideration. That is, once a thought enters your mind, you begin to think about it. You start to look at all the aspects of it. Like a jewel, you turn it around and see how it reflects at every angle. So, a thought becomes a consideration. A consideration becomes an attitude: the more you think about it, the more prone you start thinking in that direction. So it can become an attitude.

The attitude becomes an action. You think long enough, and you lean in that direction long enough; the attitude will become an action. If the action repeats over and over again, it becomes a habit, and the habit becomes a stronghold.

So you begin with a very innocent thought you studied: Treated carefully and have considered often. It became an attitude that developed in your spirit, mind, and heart. The attitude became an action for a while when you had to vent what you were thinking. The action repeated once, twice, three times, ten times, a hundred times, until it becomes a habit: and the habit before long, you understood, it was no longer you in control. Now, the habit is controlling you.

Satan has a power base in your life, and when he wants to bring you down into that thing, he calls the play, and down you go. And that's the way the stronghold develops in a person's life. It can develop in a young person's life, or an adult person's life, but we have to remember that once a thought comes to our mind, every single evil thought carries with it the potential of becoming a stronghold from which Satan will harass, defeat, divide, and disillusioned your whole Christian experience.