

DEALING WITH STRONGHOLDS—PART 1
2 CORINTHIANS 10:3-5

Introduction

Understand that even after we are saved, we all still walk in this sinful flesh. *The Apostle Paul spoke of his struggles in Romans 7:18—“For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.”*

We know that many times, even though we may have a **desire to do what is right**, we oft times battle against some **overwhelming strongholds** in this **sinful flesh** that we live in that sometimes just **seem to get the best of us!** **JESUS** told **HIS** Disciples: *Matthew 26:41—“Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”*

Let me ask you a question...I’m not asking for an outward response, just respond in your heart, *“Do you have a **DESIRE to LIVE for GOD and to PLEASE GOD in everything you do?**”* Let me say that, if you are saved by **GOD’S GRACE**, you should. Because **if you don’t have that DESIRE then there is something genuinely wrong in your heart!**

Every genuine **BELIEVER** *should have the **DESIRE to LIVE for GOD and PLEASE GOD even though we all still fall short of GOD’S GLORY in our lives!***

I could ask (again, I’m not looking for an outward response in this...just give it some serious thought)...*“How many of you have some stronghold in your life that you continually battle?”* If we are honest and took time to think about it, I believe we **ALL** would find that **we have some area in our life that just seems to keep coming back up and causes us problems!**

When I refer to *“strongholds,”* I am talking about **habits or recurring patterns of behavior** that **keep manifesting themselves in our lives** and are **destructive in our lives**. Understand that these things may be destructive to us as well as to others around us.

We often refer to these *strongholds* as *“easily besetting sins.”*

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Hebrews 12:1—“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,”

We might even refer to these *“strongholds”* as a **bad habit** or an **addictive behavior**. When we think of *strongholds* or *addictions* in folks lives, we don’t like to think we have any, do we? We don’t like to think of ourselves in that light.

But more likely than not, we **ALL** have areas in our lives where we need help in **overcoming some sort of bad habit or addictive behavior**. So, this message (or I should say series of messages) is designed to help each of us with the *strongholds* in our own lives.

Now when we think of **addictions**, we normally think of the ones that **may not affect us**. Well, we could list all the popular ones like: *Alcohol, Drugs, Cigarettes, Food (High Fructose Corn Syrup!), and one that surfaces more and more in our technologically advanced world, Pornography!*

But what about some other things that can have a *stronghold* in our lives like: *A Bad Temper, Uncontrolled Anger, Gossip, Filthy Communication, Lust.*

The question is usually not **IF** we have a problem with *strongholds*, (because most folks do!) The question is **WHAT CAN WE DO** about the things that have a *stronghold* on us?

Let me share some of these with you:

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I. **KNOW WHERE SIN ORIGINATES!**
(i.e. Every sin has its origin in the heart!)

Satan’s Sin Originated In His Heart!

Isaiah 14:13-14—“For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High.”

Mankind’s Sin Originates In His Heart!

Mark 7:21-23—“For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.”

A. **The World Says, “Follow Your Heart,” But The Bible Says That Our Hearts Are Deceitful And Desperately Wicked.**
Jeremiah 17:9—“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?”

“deceitful”—means “fraudulent.” (i.e. It will lie to you!)

Proverbs 28:26—“He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool: but whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered.”

B. **The World Says “Live And Let Live”, But Bible Says That Our Hearts Are To Be Guarded With All Diligence.**
Proverbs 4:23—“Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.”

Romans 13:14—“But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.”

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C. **The World Says, “Take Life As It Comes”, But The Bible Says That Our Hearts Are To Be Guided In The Way.**
Proverbs 23:19—“Hear thou, my son, and be wise, and guide thine heart in the way.”

Psalms 139:23-24—“Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

KNOW WHERE SIN ORIGINATES!

(i.e. Every sin has its origin in the heart!)

The Heart Is Deceitful And Desperately Wicked.

The Heart Is To Be Guarded Diligently.

The Heart Is To Be Guided Wisely.

II. **TAKE GOD’S ATTITUDE TOWARD SIN! (Galatians 5:19-21)**
(i.e. If GOD is against it, we should be against it!)

One of our biggest problems is that we don’t hate sin like we should! If we don’t hate sin, we will likely end up embracing it.

A. **We Are To Abhor And Hate Evil!**

Romans 12:9—“Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.” “Abhor”—means “to utterly detest.”

Proverbs 8:13—“The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate.”

Psalms 97:10—“Ye that love the LORD, hate evil. . .”

Psalms 101:3—“I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me.”

Psalms 119:104—“Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way.”

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Amos 5:15—“Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate:”

Hebrews 1:9, says in reference to Jesus, “**Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity**; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.”

We Are To Abhor Evil And Hate Evil!

B. We Are To Depart From Evil!

Psalms 34:14 and Psalm 37:27—“Depart from evil, and do good.”

Proverbs 3:7-8—“Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil. It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones.”

Isaiah 1:16—“Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil;”

2 Timothy 2:19—“Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.”

1 Peter 3:10—“For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.”

“eschew”—means “to deviate from or to shun.”
(The Bible says that Job *feared God and eschewed evil*)

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Did you know that the word “confess” in *1 John 1:9* means “to say the same thing.”

TAKE GOD’S ATTITUDE TOWARD SIN!
(If God is against it, we should be against it!)
Abhor Or Hate Evil! Depart From Evil!

III. UNDERSTAND THAT IT IS BETTER FOR US TO KEEP OUR HEART CLEAN THAN IT IS TO TRY TO CLEAN IT AFTER IT HAS BEEN DEFILED!

Taking an attitude of “well, I can sin now and confess later” is not wise!

Proverbs 22:3—“A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished.”

Not a one of us can sin with impunity!

Proverbs 6:27-28—“Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned?”

We Learn This Lesson From The Examples Left By Various Bible Characters:

A. Lessons From The Life Of Lot! (*Genesis 19*)

Lot would have been a lot better off had he never pitched his tent toward Sodom!

1. Sin Can Have A Powerful Effect On Us Personally!

2 Peter 2:8—“For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;”

2. Sin Can Have A Powerful Effect On Those Near And Dear To Us!

Romans 14:7—“For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.”

a. It Affected His Wife!

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b. It Affected His Children!

3. Sin Can Have A Powerful Effect On What We Have Materially!

Lot entered Sodom a wealthy man and left it with just the clothes on his back!

4. Sin Can Have A Long Lasting Effect!

All I've got to say are two words:
Moabites and Ammonites.

B. Lessons From The Life Of Achan! (*Joshua 7*)

1. Be Sure Your Sin Will Find You Out!

Achan took and hid a nice garment, 200 shekels of silver, 50 shekels of gold and thought nobody would know!

2. The Gain That Sin May Bring Is Not Worth The Loss That It Brings!

Achan didn't even get to enjoy what he took!
But it cost him dearly!

3. Our Sin May Cost Us Our Lives And/Or The Lives Of The Ones We Love!

C. Lessons From The Life Of Samson! (*Judges 13-16*)

It would have been much easier on Samson if he had kept the power of God on his life than it was to get the power back again after he lost it!

1. Sin Is Binding!

Romans 6:16–“*Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey;*”

2. Sin Is Blinding!

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3. Sin Is Grinding!

Proverbs 13:15–“*Good understanding giveth favour: but the way of transgressors is hard.*”

D. Lessons From The Life Of Jonah. (*Book of Jonah*)

1. Sin Will Take You Where You Don't Want To Go!

How many drunks set out to be on skidrow on purpose?

How many drug addicts set out to have the kind of life they now live?

How many people with STD's became immoral to get those diseases?

2. Sin Will Keep You There Longer Than You Want To Stay!

3. Sin Will Cost You More Than You Want To Pay!
Sin has consequences! We can choose to sin, but we cannot choose the consequences!

Conclusion

What kind of *strongholds* do you have in your life? Think about it!
What is your attitude toward those things (sins) that **God hates** in your life?
What are you doing to guard your heart from sin? Are you taking any steps to guard yourself from being drawn in to sinning in the area of your ***strongholds***?

Why not spend more time on the front end keeping yourself from sin rather than trying to pick up the pieces of your life after sin has shattered your life.
If you are here without Christ, understand that you'll never get victory over *strongholds* in your life until you first come to Christ!