

# STAND FIRM AGAINST “STRONGHOLDS” *By Os Hillman*



The apostle Paul enlists the word “stronghold” to define the spiritual fortresses where Satan and his legions go for protection. These fortresses exist in the thought-patterns and ideas that govern individuals in their homes, workplaces and churches, as well as in communities and nations. Before victory can be claimed, these strongholds must be pulled down. Only then can the mighty weapons of the Word and the Spirit effectively plunder Satan’s house. As Paul states,

***The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ (2 Cor. 10:4-5).***

Here is an example of how a stronghold can develop and affect someone’s working life. “Jerry” had grown up with a father who was successful and a workaholic. Although Jerry lacked for nothing materially, he felt a lack of closeness to his parents and had difficulty sharing his feelings with others as an adult. When Jerry was still in his early teens, his father died very suddenly. His large family was left with little support, and insecurity and fear became the dominating factors in the young man’s life.

Vowing to himself that he would never again suffer financial need, Jerry worked hard at his business in his adult life, putting stress on many personal and business relationships. He became very successful. His relationship with God was seen as a model among his peers, but when examined closer, there was something that just wasn’t right. He often displayed anger in stressful situations and he would shame his employees into correcting their behaviors.

Jerry had little accountability beyond his clients. A pattern began to emerge that motivated Jerry to place restrictions on those around him when they failed in the financial area. Finally, Jerry's marriage disintegrated and some major crises in his business led to financial difficulties.

However, through the counsel of some trusted friends who had an understanding of spiritual strongholds, Jerry came to realize that underneath some of these symptoms, a religious stronghold of insecurity and fear had been established. To reduce his anxiety level, Jerry (and his father and grandfather before him) had worked hard to control people and circumstances.

As the Holy Spirit convicted him of sins he had committed against people in his life, Jerry sought forgiveness and made restitution. His priorities shifted to God and family first, followed by close friends and business. God began to show Jerry that he could have true intimacy with God and others when these underlying strongholds were removed. Jerry became a new person, and for the first time he experienced a degree of intimacy and freedom in his walk with God. Today, Jerry sees the hand of God restoring all aspects of his life and can testify to God's miraculous hand in many of his everyday experiences in life and work.

**I am pleased to tell you that I am "Jerry".** It is from first-hand experience that I can discuss the effect of spiritual strongholds that can plague our personal lives and, inevitably, our work lives.

By reading between the lines in the first two chapters of Genesis, as well as elsewhere in the Bible, we find that God created us with seven needs: (1) dignity, (2) authority, (3) blessing and provision, (4) security, (5) purpose and meaning, (6) freedom and boundaries, and (7) love and companionship. Whenever we seek to meet one or more of these basic needs outside God's design, we have set the stage for the development of a generational stronghold.

God wants to release the full measure of His love in our lives, so that we no longer need to operate out of old strongholds. In Ephesians 3:16-18, Paul prayed that we would experience this fullness:

*I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.*

When I came into a greater understanding of the operation of spiritual strongholds, I did a thorough study of my family history. I interviewed family members to see what I could learn about the way my father and grandfather related to God and their families. I studied their work habits. I found that each of us had the same symptoms:

- **a need for recognition from performance (civic projects, sports, business success)**
- **an emphasis on building financial security (we were workaholics)**
- **a lack of emotional intimacy**
- **a works-based relationship toward God**
- **a tendency to over-control people and circumstances**

This was an amazing discovery for me. For the first time, I realized this stronghold had affected three generations of my family. I was being given the opportunity to break this generational stronghold through the power of Christ so that it would not get passed down any further.

Strongholds work at the subconscious level and are not easily recognized until a major crisis in a person's life forces him or her to look deeper at the root causes of the problem. I learned that one root of the religious spirit is control. Man does not want to give up control over his life, so he creates control systems designed to make him feel acceptable by God. Again, this is a works-based attempt to gain God's favor, which invalidates the work of the Cross.

***Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to STAND FIRM against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world-forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armour of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to STAND FIRM. STAND FIRM therefore ...  
(Ephesians 6: 11-13 NASB).***

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