

STRONGHOLDS The Fifth Stage of Decay

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It can be tempting to use what you are about to learn as a churchy topic of conversation: Don't. It is a holy thing not to be treated lightly. To do so nullifies the power of understanding to defeat the Enemy. There are some things you do not discuss; one is a special word you received from God, and the other is a warning you received to give to another. Both are holy; treat them that way. Otherwise conversation of Holy things outside their context dilutes their spiritual power and significance; their effect is to adulterate God's grace and mercy, reducing the impact upon the soul. One would not discuss their spouse's sexual intimacies to another. Hence don't talk about your intimacies with God.

As anticipated, this topic has been fraught with false starts, distractions, deceptive emotions and mental mirages. I have had the personal understanding for 30-odd years now. But it has been derailed, led up blind alleys and deceptively switched onto irrelevant spurs. But all in all, the understanding that which follows to a large degree has liberated me in my walk, was taught to my seed (who in turn are rearing their own seed according to their natures and bents). For a season, I taught this to others.

In short, it has granted me freedom, for which Jesus came. It is the model that governs my internal being, as well as how I relate to others, good or bad. This understanding has kept me from a lot of heartache, a lot of heartache. It has also allowed me to empathize with others whom many would not touch, let alone be an instrument of deliverance.

By this, *I know who I am, I know what I was, and I fear with a holy fear what I could easily be.*

Strongholds by their very essence are the barriers between us mortals and the experience of the realm of the Most High, in particular His Son, now Sovereign¹. Every trick in the book of life is thrown up against us to derail our efforts to gain the privileged Presence, to keep us enslaved to our former ways and being. Far deadlier is our bias and inclination to hang onto our *selves*.

By its very definition a Stronghold portrays a type of barricade, a fortress, some sort of enclosure, implying physical protection from some outside opponent. In the mental realm the word conveys all the supporting data in and around an argument or other mental exercise, rendering it mentally impenetrable. In the Greek the word is *ochuroma*², those things in which human confidence is imposed. Repeated acting, then is an *ochuroma* which covers a given behavior, thus instilling confidence the root is hidden behind a spiritual fence.

¹ II Cor. 10:5-6

² II Cor. 10:4

Those in power having their own agendas well established might say this knowledge of strongholds is a portion of the banned Knowledge of Good and Evil; maybe so. Some say in all honesty all you have to do is accept the freedom Jesus provided, and that which accompanied your being born again; maybe so, maybe not. Some even claim to be sinless; *sinless?* For those of us born on the wrong side of the tracks, and have personally experienced the dark side, the feel-gooders and “sinless” know little of which they speak.

What follows is the fodder for the war within ourselves which we all fight, whether obliviously or consciously. It is foreign thinking to the majority, to some anathema, to some heresy, to some just more information with which to enhance their own images, or to bludgeon and castrate their fellow humans. The former is the spirit of Arrogance, the latter the spirits of Cruelty and Manipulation.

Therefore I am loathe to make a mistake here; my deepest fear is the placing of a principle in the hands of present-day Pharisees, Sadducees and Scribes. Their spirits are alive and well, you know, waiting to put everyone in their place.

The anonymity of this written commentary cancels various negative responses from having been exposed³. None of us wants anyone to know of our secret places which beset, defeat, deter and prevent us from being healthy. Health in this case refers to not only the physical, but the mental and spiritual as well. But our bent towards excessive desires is common to all men; therefore these examples seem pointed and personal.

As is the case most of the time, the bulk of our mental and spiritual nemeses, i.e. our individual sin natures, were not originated by us specifically, but inherited, acquired and augmented at a very young age. Thence the acting and pretence takes over, having been tested by years of practice. Nonetheless, we have the choice whether we continue to enhance and embrace them, or deal with them according to His ways.

But alas, few and far between are those adults who reverse their courses; the mind’s entrenched biases are hard to counter; thus the personally prescribed level of pain. It is the Fool that discounts his difficulties and ascribes his pain to sources not responsible. This shifting the blame usually falls on their mate, with the Devil and God coming in close seconds. It is also the Fool that “speaks no evil, hears no evil, nor sees no evil” in himself.

What did Jesus mean when He said, “Set us free”? –set us free from what ? For those of us in America, this certainly does not mean from a physical prison or from slavery. So obviously He meant free from our mental and spiritual chains, the parts of us that are eternal. He meant “set us free” *from ourselves* and our innate bent away from His ways..

³ Hebrews 12:6, quoting Prov:3:11.12; The word ‘punish’ here means to expose. Exposing us forces us to make a choice.

The first words of both John the Baptist and Jesus were “Repent”. A close look at the word ‘repent’ reveals a telling definition. If we repent, we are to forsake our *acting, our vain pretences*; we are to *alter our judgments* about people and situations. It means to heartily turn our behaviors around and go the other direction.

But how do we separate the precious from the vile? How do we discriminate between the Godly and the profane, our God-given bents from the traits of the Evil One? A most basic answer is one where we allow the Holy Spirit to deal with us. Ah, but there the cheese gets binding, the syrup won’t flow out of the bottle, there is ‘many a slip ‘twixt the cup and the lip’, as the English say.

PART ONE

Strongholds From Within Ourselves

Sin Natures

Sometime in the early 80s I began to grasp the One God was expressed in three distinct personalities, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. These personalities were introduced to His first-called people through God the Father’s exquisite design in the Mosaic Tabernacle. Specifically this is the inner partition called the Holy Place. In this partition were three pieces of furniture, if you will. As you walked into the Holy Place, in front of you was the Table of Incense representing the Holy Spirit. To the left was the Golden Lampstand, representing the Son. Across the room on the right was the Table of Shewbread, representing the Father⁴.

As the years progressed, I came to understand the Times during which these three appeared onto the scene of Man created after *their* image. The O.T. represents the Time of the Father. In N.T. days, Jesus the Son appeared; since His ascension and Pentecost, we now are in the Time of the Holy Spirit, the latter of three periods.

Examining the primary personalities of the O.T. reveals the Father’s types, e.g., Adam, Abraham, Isaac, Israel, and so forth, the Patriarchs as they are known. Interspersed in prophetic form are Joshua and David, fore-shadow types of Christ as Deliverer and King. Likewise, the N.T. passages reveal the Son, and His forecast of passing the baton to the Spirit.

From Eve until now Satan has tried to pervert the plan of God to redeem, deliver and set free. This perversion has taken many forms, the twisting and reversal of the personalities of the Trinity being primary. As we will see, these personality perversions are not only mentioned in I John, but also acted out throughout history. The three perversions are personified time and time again throughout the Testaments. They are acted out today in each one of us.

⁴ Ben-Issachar, *in* The Third Realm, The Seen and the Unseen.

When Adam ‘fell’, the three unified natures of the Trinity within him split into three separate and opposing natures. These three were, are, and will continue to be opposing and contrary to one another until eliminated (*not* rehabilitated) by the transfiguration of our old sin nature into the image of Christ.

The war we fight, as in any war, is on two fronts, within and without. There was a scene in the movie, *Band of Brothers*, where a very fearful private was hiding in a barditch to keep from being killed. When discovered and confronted by his CO, he confessed he was scared of dying. The CO wisely replied (somewhat paraphrased), “Private, when you realize you are *already dead*, you’ll make a good soldier.”

This is why Jesus said three times we must ‘deny ourselves’. The word ‘deny’ here means to completely reject the old self, to literally pronounce it does not even exist. Hopefully at some juncture before we die physically the truth will dawn on us and we will relate to Paul’s death march in Romans 6 and 7, and groan, “Who will deliver me from this body of death?!”

We will see the personality perversions depicted as the three sin natures of Lust of the Flesh, Lust of the Eyes and the Pride of Life. These are the individual roots of Strongholds in each of us. Indeed, these *are* the Strongholds to which all temptations to our affections and their resulting destruction find their lair.

In I John 2:16,17 it is written (Amplified): “For all that is in the world-the lust of the flesh (craving and illegal desire) for sensual gratification, and the lust of the eyes (greedy longings of the mind) and the pride of life (the assurance of one’s own resources) -these do not come from the Father but are of the world itself....the world and all of its forbidden cravings, passionate desires and the lust of it is passing away; but he who does the will of God and carries out His purposes remains forever.”

As it is written, let every word be confirmed in the mouths of two or three witnesses. There are three main characters in the Word that furnish the witnesses. The first is Eve in the garden, the second is David and the third is Jesus Himself. Let us see; as we do, take mental notes as how familiar they might be to your own experiences and habits.

In the account of the temptation of Eve in Genesis 3, we find the serpent beguiled Eve in three formats. The first was an accusation, “Hath God said?” (mental), then a lie, “You shall not die” (physical), followed by an enticement, “You will be like God.” (spiritual). (We suddenly remember; first we are introduced to a thought that is an accusation, then comes a lie, thence an enticement. NO? -try it next time.)

The three deductions by Eve are found in verse 6, when *she* decided:

- one, the fruit was good for food (sensual, Lust of the Flesh.)
- two, the fruit was a delight to the eyes (Lust of the Eyes), and finally,
- three, the fruit was to be desired to make one wise (Pride of Life)

In the account of David's life, we find three episodes in which these three temptations are punctuated. The first is found in II Samuel 6 where David decided to bring the Ark of the Covenant back to Jerusalem, a most admirable intention. In doing so, "they carried the ark of God on a new cart (notice it was a 'new' cart) and brought it out of the house of Abinadab which was on the hill."

Everybody was happy, singing, dancing, making merry; ah, but then the cart started to tip over; Uzzah tried to catch it and was slain there on the spot. The party was over; ever been there? Moral of the story? –David thought he knew best how to do things, rather than check the Word for the right way. In other words, he thought more highly of himself than he ought. This is the hallmark of the Pride of Life.

The second quickly follows, and is found in I Samuel 11, where David thought he needed a respite from all his hard work. He was a little tired of fighting. So he sent all his warriors off to war (abdication) and decided to stay in Jerusalem. Ah, what snares lie ahead from the shirking of our responsibilities! Lo and behold, guess who was naked on the roof just below him?

Why, it was the most beautiful woman in those parts, taking a bath in broad open daylight! And in full knowledge King David was just up one flight taking a nap. Fancy that!

Have you guessed the perversion and sin nature? Right on, Lust of the Flesh. Wall to wall Sensuality; sleep, abdication, idleness, sex, deception, cowardice, (Uriah to the front lines), murder, and then the reaping, the sword staying in his house.

The third is found in II Samuel 24, where God was angry with David (?) and incited him to number Israel. Joab pleaded with him not to do this thing. David would not listen but had his commanders number Israel. David wanted to know his power level, the source of his boasting, the aphrodisiac of being in control, of ruling. Sin nature? Of course, Lust of the Eyes.

Now let us fast-forward to ca. 30 A.D. as Jesus is coming out of the wilderness after 40 days of purging. Hungry, tired and spent, as weak as wilderness can make a human. Here comes the old serpent with his tried and true methods of tripping mankind, causing them to stumble. Why, it worked with Eve and David, and untold others throughout history; surely it ought to work with this 'human'.

So Satan fires the first and easiest volley across Jesus' bow; since He was hungry, Satan tempted Him with food. *If* you are the son of God, make these stones bread. "Nope", saith He, "You're supposed to live by what my Father said, in addition to just eating bread." Sensuality in all five receptors, food being paramount. Lust of the Flesh, plain and simple.

Undaunted, the serpent tries the next best trick, appealing to man's pride. "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from this pinnacle of the temple." Naw, naw, naw, Satan. We are not to tempt the LORD our God." Tempting speaks of presumptuousness, thinking you know better than God what to do. Remember David? Classic Pride of Life.

"Well", says the serpent to himself, "Let's try the thing that gets even the best of them; power, control and influence." So he says. "I'll give you all the kingdoms with all their glory." (he had them *then*...but not for long) "Get out of my face, Satan! It is written (our source of resistance and victory), you shall worship only the LORD your God!!" Power, control, influence, the opiate of the Lust of the Eyes.

Since these things are written as examples and warnings for us, we best take note. We see all three propensities of the sin natures present and in all of the primary persons. Equally all three propensities dwell in us by virtue of the Fall.

But just as in the Trinity there was a predominant expression of the Father, so also we have a predominant expression, albeit an evil, perverse one. This expression within each of us will be one of the three sin natures addressed in I John. When we are born again of the Spirit, the Old Man's nature still resides in our subconscious, our bodies and our minds⁵. So then we are commanded to "renew our minds" with the Word, to allow the Holy Spirit to rule not only over our minds, but over the affections of the body and subconscious.

We equally were formed to be tripartite tents and sanctuaries in which God would dwell. When we are born again by the Spirit, God indeed begins to dwell in us, being a new creation. So we now have a conflict⁶ between our God-Spirit and the old man with all of its evil propensities. This former nature still occupies our middle ground, the mind (and its subparts), which in turn still controls our bodies, the physical.

The Fall precipitated division between the three 'parts', obliterating the Union or Oneness of the three Images of God. Even after spiritual rebirth, this division remains by pitting the Spirit within us against our old nature, and also pitting one sin nature against another. This conflict between believers is because the individual natures still reside to one degree or another within the person. It will continue to dominate and divide until renewed and conquered by the Word and sincere effort of the person.

The crux of the matter is that one of the three will rule in large measure how we act, think and say. One of the three will dominate our *motives* for doing what we do. One of the three will color and skew whatever we think, do or say. In other words, each of us will perversely accentuate the physical body and its sensual aspects (Lust of the Flesh), or our souls/minds (Pride of Life), or our old hearts (Lust of the Eyes).

⁵ Ben-Issachar, *in* The Third Realm, *He Who Overcomes*. An explanation of the mind's three parts.

⁶ Romans 6,7

Thus the Pride of Life (POL) continues to be arrogant, boastful, presumptuous, and superior to the other two. His fellow LOF is viewed as crude and less than perfect, the Lust of the Eyes (LOE) unorganized and sloppy. The LOF equally wars not only against himself, but against the other two, viewing the POL as arrogant and perfectionist, the LOE dangerous and weak.

The LOE wars against himself and the other two, by manipulating and flattering the POL and contemning the LOF.

Even when Believers have a very superficial exposure to this subject, the predominant mindset is that of Lust, particularly the Lust of the Flesh. It is the expressions of physical sins that prevail in the minds of those not afflicted with such dominant weaknesses. In other words, few admit inward sins. The spotlight is kept on sins of the five senses, taste (gluttony, drinking, smoking, drugs), feeling (sex, sleeping and laziness), hearing, (foul music), seeing (cleavage, pornography, foul movies) and smelling (food, room deodorizers).

In other words, most of Christendom considers the outward, visible physical sins as being “sinful”. The focus is away from sins of the mind and our hearts, our innermost ‘parts’ of motives, intents, attitudes, agendas, body language and tone of voice. Yet there is where the most damage is done to fellow humans, not just fellow believers. The sins of superiority, presumptuousness, manipulation and contempt far outweigh plain ‘ol sex, smokin’ and drinkin’.

All the while the Spirit within each of us is vying for unity with the spirits of the other believers. Sometimes it works where the believers are mature and the Word is supreme in each, but predominantly disunity reigns; ergo, a hundred denominations and millions of unscriptural opinions.

So this war wages on two fronts, within ourselves and against other believers. It will continue until death, literally or figuratively, until the believer crucifies his flesh. Ominously the war with others is irrelevant until the war with ourselves is won. If we do not conquer our old nature, it will continue to be divisive within and without.

Equally ominous, if we do not crucify our sin nature (‘ourselves’), these natures, or generational spirits as I call them, will be passed onto our seed. In the passing, they will be manifested in a magnified form, with much weightier consequences. Few there are who will step up to the Bar and confess, “*Mea culpa!*” “I am the primary fountain of my seed’s sins!!”

It is said “divorce begins in the bedroom.” In both the physical and mental, this is true, particularly the physical; but it is in the mind where the war rages and divorce (division, disunity) commences. Herein lies the gargoye of our old sin nature, un-acknowledged, un-conquered, un-replaced.

Then Jesus will accurately and appropriately declare to us. “I never knew you.”

What is that He “did not *know*”?

The glaring answer is that He, being the Word, knows the Word. If the Word does not dwell in you, and the Word (He Himself) has not *become* you, then He does not know you. More acutely and tragically, you do not know Him, you just think so.

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In this paper, Part I illuminates our current state within, Part II the various scriptural antidotes; Part III shows us the Strongholds affecting us both from within and without our marriages. The latter come at us primarily through the institution of marriage, i.e. both spousal ancestries, incorrect adoptions, soul ties, illicit sexual activities and various other outside associations, ‘churches’ being paramount.