

Demolishing Strongholds Video Series

God's Way to Spiritual Freedom

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Chapter 2, The Demonic Forces in
Strongholds (Part 1 of 4)

"So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed"



Freedom In Jesus Series

(Part 2)

Chapter 2

The Demonic Forces In Strongholds

As we go on in Chapter 2 we'll be introducing you to the unseen world of demonic strongholds. But before we expose the work of unclean spirits, we want to review an important subject we covered extensively in Part 1 of our **Freedom In Jesus** series.

First let's anchor two biblical realities that are foundational to understand how God views us:

1. Man is first and foremost a sinner at heart.
2. Each generation is born with a propensity to sin that goes all the way back to Adam.

Not many of us like to think of ourselves as depraved sinners. But that's how God portrays us in the Bible. And it's important for us to make this vital connection: The more we appreciate just how predisposed to sin we really are, the greater our appreciation is for what Jesus accomplished on our behalf on the cross.

And, because we don't want to turn back again to that old sinful way, we'll cling more closely to Him on our lifelong pilgrimage to salvation.

As we've mentioned before: The Bible emphasizes that man's motives are NOT basically good, but evil. We quoted God's view of man in a previous segment.

"The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that EVERY INCLINATION of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time" (Genesis 6:5).

The apostle Paul made plain that "ALL have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." It's important for you to realize that our propensity to sin is why our Father had to choose His own unique method to redeem us from our sins — His Son, Jesus.

If you don't recognize your innate tendency to sin, you'll find it hard to accept God's perspective on this barrier that keeps you from walking in spiritual union with Him. And it's important to realize that your sin nature is that part of you that cooperates with Satan.

When given a choice to do good or evil, our inherited sin nature acts like a magnet toward evil. Helping us to sin is Satan using temptation as his magnet. To our own detriment, as we grow accustomed to giving in to sin, we provide the critical ingredient for strongholds to form.

That's why we're told to NOT give in to our sinful nature, but to resist temptation. And, most importantly, to turn to sinless Jesus with humble hearts for the help we need to live holy lives.

Paul certainly understood the struggle that we followers of Jesus face. It is a lifelong tension:

"I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the DESIRE to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is NOT the good I want to do; no, the EVIL I do not want to do — this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do NOT want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin LIVING in me that does it. So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me." (Romans 7:18-21)

To get a better understanding of ourselves, let's take a moment to look at what we receive when we're conceived.

In your mother's womb you received your spirit from God. Your spirit is eternal; it doesn't cease at death.

You also receive from them your soul, which is composed of your mind, will, and emotions.

And, from your parents, you inherit your body's physical features.

Scripture substantiates that we're body, soul, and spirit:

"May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:23).

The body is the part of us that's subject to the physical frailties of injury, disease, and ultimately death.

Your soul consists of your mind, will, and emotions — the arenas of your thoughts, determination, and your feelings.

Your spirit represents the ETERNAL part of your being that's owned either by Satan as the ruler of this world's system, or by God, Who has redeemed us from slavery to sin.

As you deal with demolishing your own strongholds later in this book, it's important that you understand that your propensity to sin goes all the way back to Adam:

"Here is how it works: it was through one individual [Adam] that sin entered the world, and through sin, death; and in this way death passed through to the whole human race, inasmuch as everyone sinned" (Romans 5:12).

One other thing that you inherit is the responsibility for the sins of your ancestors. That's right! Along with your body, soul, and spirit you also inherit the sins and iniquities passed along from your forefathers.

Most of us would like to think we only have to concern ourselves with our own sins. But God holds us accountable for the sins of our forefathers. So you're born not only with a tendency to sin, but also with the inherited responsibility for the sins of your ancestors. This is the source of *generational strongholds*, which we'll discuss later in this chapter.

Numerous prophets of God, such as Ezra, Nehemiah, Daniel and David, confirm personal responsibility for the sins of our forefathers. For example:

"See, it stands written before me: I will not keep silent but will pay back in full; I will pay it back into their laps — both your sins and the sins of your fathers,' says the LORD" (Isaiah 65:6,7a).

We'll come back to the sins of our ancestors later in Chapter 2. Let me repeat a vital point: through your SOUL you've received your predisposition to sin. And a spiritual battle is being fought over who will rule your soul: the Holy Spirit or demonic strongholds.

Don't get discouraged! It's because of our Father's loving desire for reconciliation, and intimate relationship with us that He sent Jesus on our behalf:

"For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive; So it is written: 'The first man Adam became a living being'; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit" (1 Corinthians 15:22,45).

We encourage you: Become more aware of your spirit and soul. Recognize the TOTAL you: spirit, soul, and body. Why? Before any of us responded to the Spirit of God and put our trust in Jesus to become our Father's child, our earthly relationships were based on our soul and body. AFTER the strongholds are gone, you're in tune with the Holy Spirit. So you'll need to revamp ALL your relationships: your marriage, your parents, your children, and all others close to you.

(Explore: Going to the High Places study guide, Chapter 6, "*Detour Through the Desert*")

Notice the order of importance in how you respond to people when you're influenced by strongholds.

Relationships WITH Strongholds

First: Soul

Second: Body

Third: Spirit

Now see how that order changes when the strongholds are gone, and you're hearing the voice of the Holy Spirit FIRST in your relationships!

Relationships WITHOUT Strongholds:

First: Spirit

Second: Soul

Third: Body

When strongholds are influencing you, ALL your relationships are out of whack. Your relationships were formed through the filter of your *soul*, with its strongholds and sin nature in control. In other words, these relationships are tainted.

RE-ALIGNING how you relate to others is a critical feature of your life *after* you've demolished the strongholds that influence your current relationships. But beware: If strongholds are influencing you, *none* of your relationships, including that with God, are the way HE wants them.

We'll help you re-align your relationships in Chapter 5, *After You've Demolished The Strongholds*.

The Demonic Forces Arrayed Against You

In the Newer Testament, people who are afflicted by evil spirits are often said to be "demon-possessed." The Greek word translated in these cases, *daimonizomenoi*, is more literally rendered "demonized". That means they're NOT possessed but AFFLICTED or INFLUENCED in some degree by demons.

The emphasis is more on *degree* of influence or control than on *total* possession. The manifestation and intensity of demonization varies: a young man was thrown into convulsions by the spirit tormenting him (Luke 9:38-43); a demonized man cried out in the synagogue where Jesus was teaching, "What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy US?" (Luke 4:33-36).

Luke describes a slave girl who had a spirit by which she predicted the future (Acts 16:16). And a deranged man from the

region of the Gerasenes who was inhabited by a *legion* of evil spirits was still able to run to Jesus (Luke 8:26-39).

In each of these cases, “influence” or “control” is a more accurate description than “possession.”

Remember, as followers of Jesus we’ve been sealed with the Holy Spirit, “a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession.” (Ephesians 1:14)

Yet, to the extent in which we have fellowship with demons as Paul warns (1 Corinthians 10:20), we open ourselves to demonic influence and affliction in our soul. Eventually this influence will lead to ever deeper oppression and a greater desire to sin.

The battlefield between the Spirit of God and the demonic spirits is being fought in the area of your soul — your mind, will, and emotions. It’s here that you face your daily decisions of Holy Spirit-controlled living or sin-influenced living:

“Those who live according to the sinful nature have their MINDS set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their MINDS set on what the Spirit desires. The MIND of sinful man is death, but the MIND controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful MIND is hostile to God. It does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so” (Romans 8:5-7).

The following warnings are given to FOLLOWERS OF JESUS. You ARE susceptible to demonic attack, and you need to take to heart these admonitions:

“Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes.” (Ephesians 6:11)

“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” (Ephesians 6:12)

“Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.” (1 Peter 5:8)

“The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.” (1 Timothy 4:1)

You can clearly see by these verses that Christians today ARE engaged in the same kind of spiritual warfare that Jesus and His disciples confronted.

Both the Older and Newer Testaments are full of references to evil and unclean spirits. When you choose to give in to temptation rather than resist, you open up a Foothold for demonic influence.

We’re warned about the strong connection between our willingness to sin and our vulnerability to Satan himself:

“He who keeps on sinning is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work.” (1 John 3:8)

One-third of the angels of heaven sided with Satan in their rebellion against God and were cast down to the earth.

We don't know their exact number, but we can surmise that there are *plenty* of demons to wage war against the followers of Jesus.

We'll be exploring in the following segments our WEAPONS of warfare in this daily struggle to choose righteousness rather than succumb to temptation. These weapons are indeed "mighty THROUGH GOD to the pulling down of strongholds."

The spiritual world may be hidden from our vision, but nonetheless it's very real. As those who trust Jesus, we're encouraged by the assurance that our "spirits are seated with Christ in the heavenly realms."

We're sealed with the indwelling Holy Spirit during our earthly pilgrimage (Ephesians 1:13). Yet, in spite of everything that our God accomplishes on our behalf, we're capable of being defeated IF we yield to Satan's strategies.

"[Satan] was given power to make war against the saints and to CONQUER them. And he was GIVEN AUTHORITY over every tribe, people, language and nation" (Revelation 13:7).

Anchor this reality for yourself: In the spiritual realm a vicious battle is being waged for the souls of mankind — yours included. In effect, it's a battle between God and Satan. The outcome will determine whether the truth of Jesus and His Lordship will reign in your life, or the deception of Satan triumph.

The overwhelming evidence in the Bible shows that our Father desires ALL His children to grow in character and power to conform to the image of Jesus.

Because of our potential to grow more like Jesus and to extend the *Kingdom* of God, we who follow Jesus are under greater demonic scrutiny than unbelievers. Do you know, according to pollster George Barna, almost half of today's Christians discredit the reality of "the devil" in the person of Satan? But WE believe the Word of God. We who follow Jesus must be alert at all times!

The Bible removes the mystery from Satan by revealing some very clear facts.

- He's a spirit, and the ruler of an invisible kingdom here on earth. He WORKS in those who choose to disobey God.

"As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient" (Ephesians 2:1,2).

- Satan is able to deceive people by pretending to be one of God's messengers.

"And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness" (2 Corinthians 11:14,15).

- Satan ensnares his unsuspecting victims so that they'll serve HIS purposes rather than God's.

"That they will come to their senses and escape the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will" (2 Timothy 2:26).

- Satan is committed to the destruction of those who are devoted to Jesus and walking in obedient trust in Him.

“Then the dragon [identified as Satan in Revelation 12:9] was enraged at the woman and went off to make war against the rest of her offspring — those who obey God’s commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus” (Revelation 12:17).

Satan is a deceiver. His influence in your life is often hidden, and controlled through strongholds in your mind, will, and emotions. The spirits of darkness have been given permission by YOUR sinful decisions and those of your forefathers to take up residence within THOSE AREAS of your soul that are not yielded fully to Christ.

When you give up ground in your soul to Satan, the freedom available to you in Christ is thwarted. You’re imprisoned in those areas by the influence of the demonic strongholds.

A key passage of Scripture illustrates both the operation of the spirits in their strongholds *and* how you can destroy them.

“For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. 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 Corinthians 10:3-5)

We’ll explore this passage more fully in the next segments. The insights it provides are your path to freedom.