

The Spiritual War

10. PULLING DOWN STRONGHOLDS



When an invader conquered foreign territory, their top priority was to remove the power of strongholds. A failure to remove strongholds, would nullify any victory of land. Since an invader could not occupy every square mile of land, as soon as the army moved, the enemy in the stronghold could reoccupy conquered territory.

Many Christians who find salvation in Christ, struggle in their walk, because they fail to remove strongholds. They are constantly besieged over and over again, from the same area. This happens because, the enemy is still occupying a part of their life, and unless these strongholds are pulled down battle will continue to rage.

When conquerors took territory, they would locate the strongholds. Secondly, they would gather intelligence on the stronghold. Before operations against the stronghold could begin, the conqueror needs to know the answers to specific questions.

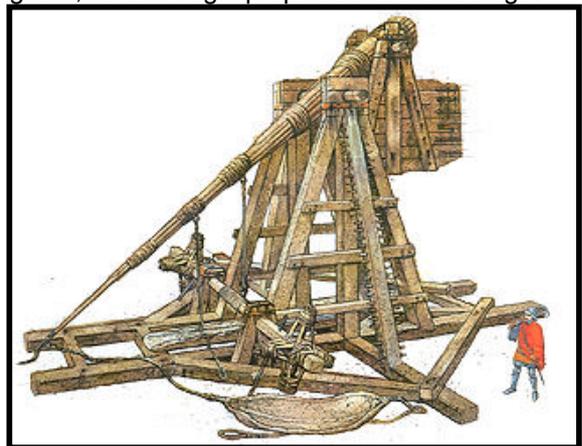
- How is the stronghold supplied?
- How large is the force within its walls?
- Where does it get its water from?
- How high and thick are its walls?
- What kind of weapons do they have?
- Are enemy reinforcements nearby?

Once the commander understands the background of the Stronghold, he can begin preparations of the siege.

The warfar

The battle against physical strongholds parallels in many ways the battle against spiritual strongholds. For us to have a victorious Christian life, we need to wage war on our strongholds. If we fail to subdue the strongholds, we will constantly be subjected to strong enemy attacks. Therefore, there is a process to being successful in our walk, it does not automatically happen. We need to decide to follow Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit. The process to pulling down strongholds is as follows.

- Identify the strongholds in your land
- Develop a strategy to subdue the stronghold
- Lay siege to the stronghold
- Subdue the stronghold to the obedience of Christ



Identify the strongholds in your land

How do we identify strongholds? When we come to Christ, an amazing event happens, The Holy Spirit comes to dwell within our tent or body. Our body becomes the Temple of God, when we become saved as God literally takes residence in our body (Ephesians 1:13-14, 2 Cor. 6:6, I Cor. 6:19). Now the Holy Spirit is called the Comforter, who teaches us (the saved) all things. Therefore, the Holy Spirit will reveal to us the areas in our life, where Satan has established strongholds. In Romans, Paul tells us how the Holy Spirit intercedes with our spirit.

26 Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.
27 Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God. **Romans 8:26-27**

In verse 26, Paul writes how the Spirit pricks our inner-man, with groaning or sighing, the Spirit testifies and intercedes where we are feeble. Now the areas where we are weak are because stronghold dominate, causing us to be weak. One person's weakness might not be another's, which is why it is important to rely on the conviction of God.

1. The Holy Spirit causes groaning

Scripture, the Sword of the Spirit, along with the Holy Spirit will shine the light on the strongholds in our life. The first step is to make our life sensitive to the Holy Spirit, and the Word of God. As we read scripture, where do you feel convicted by the Spirit?

- 1 _____ -
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____

2. Do you have fruits of the flesh?

In the book of Galatians, Paul identifies two sets of fruit, (fruit) *works of the flesh* and *fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23)*. In addition to these two sets of fruits, Paul also lists areas of the flesh, which separate those who walk in the Spirit as opposed to the flesh. As you read these lists of fruits, do you identify with any of them?

19 Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, 20 idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, 21 envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. **Galatians 5:19-21**

20 For I fear lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I wish, and that I shall be found by you such as you do not wish; lest there be contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, backbitings, whisperings, conceits, tumults; 21 lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and I shall mourn for many who have sinned before and have not repented of the uncleanness, fornication, and lewdness which they have practiced. **2 Corinthians 12:20-21**

9 Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, 10 nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. **I Corinthians 6:9-10**

5 Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. 6 Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, 7 in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them. 8 But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. **Colossians 3:5-8**

Are there areas here listed here in scripture that cause you to stumble? Have you tried and tried to change, but have not been able to gain victory in your life in certain areas? If so, the area is a stronghold, from which Satan is able to wage war on the soul.

List area in scripture you are having problems getting control of in your life.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

3. Do you have generational strongholds in your life?

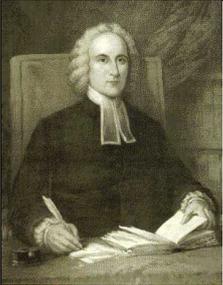
When we examine lives of people and families, we see there are strongholds of sins, which, can be traced back for generations. Scripture refers to these strongholds of sin, which transfer from generation to generation. In the Ten Commandments, the sins of the fathers are passed to the children, until a generation breaks the cycle. Idol worship was a stronghold in ancient Israel, which eventually caused God to judge the nation (Jeremiah 5:7-19, Ezekiel 8:6-18).

8 'You shall not make for yourself a carved image-any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth;
9 you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, Deuteronomy 5:8-9

We can see in Jeremiah how this sin was transferred from family to family, eventually corrupting nearly the entire nation. The people became hostile to God and His prophets; they were hostile to the Word, as their sin controlled their lives. Even after Jerusalem was destroyed they fled with their sin rather than obeying God's word, through Jeremiah.

18 "The children gather wood, the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead dough, to make cakes for the queen of heaven; and they pour out drink offerings to other gods, that they may provoke Me to anger. 19 "Do they provoke Me to anger?" says the Lord. "Do they not provoke themselves, to the shame of their own faces?" Jeremiah 7:18-19

One of the greatest example of generational strongholds was conducted in ¹ In 1900, A.E. Winship tracked down fourteen hundred of the descendants of Jonathan Edwards a pastor and university president and Max Jukes, he published his study of the Edwards children in contrast to the Jukes children.

Jonathan Edwards: Born 1703	Max Jukes: Born 1700
 <p>A man of God and married to a woman of like character. He was 24 and she was 17. On their wedding night they committed their marriage to the Lord. Their descendants included:</p> <p>300 clergymen - some missionaries and theological professors. 100 professors.</p> <p>100 attorneys. 30 judges, 1 dean of a law school. 60 physicians, 1 dean of a medical school. 3 mayors of large cities. 60 authors of fine classics.</p>	 <p>A non-believer, who married a woman of like character. She lacked principle, among other indecencies, including the occult. Of their 1200 descendants -</p> <p>Jukes family member</p> <p>310 were professional vagrants. 440 wrecked their lives through debauchery. 130 went to jail - 7 for murder, average sentence: 13 years. More than 600 became alcoholics. 60 were habitual thieves. 190 became public prostitutes. 20 became tradesmen, 10 of whom learned their</p>

¹ http://www.gutenberg.org/catalog/world/readfile?fk_files=179099

14 presidents of universities.
 3 State Governors.
 1 Controller of the US Treasury.
 1 Vice-President of the USA.

trade in prison.
 That decadency cost the state of New York
 \$1,250,000.

Generational strongholds, are ways of thinking and blindness transferred from generation to generation. Only the power of Gospel, has the power to break these generational strongholds, which can dominate families.

Idolatry is a sin transferred from generation to generation, maintaining a stronghold on a family. Many forms of family idolatry pass down the family line. Most are familiar with alcohol; just about, everybody knows families affected by this stronghold. Generational strongholds can include quite a number of variable forms, many of which might not seem so obvious.

In third commandment, idolatry is that which is worshipped above the Lord God. When something is placed above the lord it becomes idol worship. The love of money can be passed down from generations, where a family might put great pride in their business skills, not realizing it really a stronghold, trapping generations. In many ways it is no different then alcohol, its only another form of stronghold.

Drugs: A drug culture and mindsets can be passed down from generations, as children listen to the glorification of drugs and rock n roll, the stronghold is established in offspring.
lewdness: Children model what they see, if parents are model lewdness by what they watch, and say. The pattern can easily be accepted by children, who think lewdness is part of being adult.
Love of money: A successful family member in a family history can set the stage for generations to come. Each modeling their lives after the "Idol" maker, who taught them the power of money.
Politics: Politics has a lure all its own, because
violence: Family often transfer violence, from generation to generation.
adultery/fornication: Children model what they see, what becomes acceptable for kids, is often what kids look for in spouses. Thus the patterns become a stronghold in the generation.

Cutting off the supply routes

When an army decided to destroy a stronghold, one of the first things needed to do was to isolate the stronghold. This was done by cutting off supply routes to the stronghold, one method used by the Romans was to construct wall around the stronghold. This way they could be sure no one slipped in or out without their knowing. The goal was two fold, one, cause the stronghold to surrender by cutting off supplies of food and weapons. Two, prevent any one from leaving to provide intelligence to allies, who might try to come to rescue the stronghold. The Romans were masters at conquest, they understood the need to subdue enemy strongholds. They spent two years, taking the Jewish stronghold of Masada, 15,000 men working to take down a stronghold of 1000-men, women and children.

We can learn a principle from Roman siege craft if they understood the value in blockading strongholds, we should follow their example. How can we blockade our strongholds? One way is to cutoff the supply line, which feeds our stronghold. For example, if alcohol is the stronghold, if you are serious about taking the stronghold, you need to destroy your supply. You need to cut off those who would reinforce your supply, such as friends who want to take you drinking.

If pornography is a stronghold, the same principles apply, cut off the supply routes, control what gets to the stronghold to supply it. Serious action needs to be taken, to pull down strongholds. Without serious action, strongholds will remain a constant presence in the believer's life. Get rid of the cable television, the internet, the subscriptions and the friends who would supply the stronghold.

This same principle goes for all strongholds; ask what is supplying the stronghold? You know what feeds it? The goal is to bring every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.

4 For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds,
5 casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing
every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, 2 Corinthians 10:4-5

Ask yourself these questions, to help you direct your assault against the stronghold.

1. What is the stronghold in my life? _____
2. How is this stronghold supplied? _____
3. Do people in my life supply this stronghold? _____
4. What in my environment is feeding and supplying the stronghold? _____
5. Am I serious about pulling down the stronghold? _____
6. Am I willing to make myself accountable to Christian friends? _____

Building your base camp

After cutting off supplies to the stronghold, the Romans will build the assault camp, the place where the soldiers would camp out, so they can keep an eye on the stronghold. In the same way, we need to surround ourselves with people, who can help us assault the stronghold. Again, if we are serious we need to seek out people who can help us tear down the walls, people with experience.



Soldiers of the First Crusade Storming Antioch

Waging war on the stronghold

The weapons of our warfare, the Sword of the Spirit and Prayer, with this double-edged sword, we have the ability to tear down any stronghold. We need to learn to take God at His Word, the weapon of our warfare is more powerful than anything the world can ever offer.

12 For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Hebrews 4:12

To apply this double edged sword in combat, after we have identified the target stronghold. Learn what scripture has to say about particular issue.

The stronghold of pride as example

Let us take *pride* for example, over 40 verses in scripture mention pride. Start out by finding the verses in God's word, which deal with pride. List them, learn what they are referring to? A Bible Concordance, *Strong's Concordance* for example, dictionary or software can help you

locate versus.

Under pride, I would list several verses including the ones below. I would meditate on these verses; I would then begin to pray these verses so they apply to me.

19 I will break the pride of your power; I will make your heavens like iron and your earth like bronze. **Leviticus 26:19**

9 The Lord of hosts has purposed it, To bring to dishonor the pride of all glory, To bring into contempt all the honorable of the earth. **Isaiah 23:9**

3 The pride of your heart has deceived you, You who dwell in the clefts of the rock, Whose habitation is high; You who say in your heart, 'Who will bring me down to the ground?' **Obadiah 1:3**

16 For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. **1 John 2:16**

After praying on these verses, memorizing them, I would begin to wage war on the stronghold. One way is to the exact opposite of your flesh. Volunteer in a homeless shelter, do something humble refrain from exalting yourself, this only feeds the flesh. Daniel's gave advice to Nebuchadnezzar on how he was to overcome the stronghold of pride; I would use Daniel's advice to the king.

27 Therefore, O king, let my advice be acceptable to you; break off your sins by being righteous, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor. Perhaps there may be a lengthening of your prosperity."
Daniel 4:27

Praying the Word of God

We can take the Word of God and pray what it says into our life. Lets take Leviticus 26:19,

19 I will break the pride of your power; I will make your heavens like iron and your earth like bronze.
Leviticus 26:19

We can take this verse and personalize a prayer, as the Spirit groans with our pride. We might come before the throne of God and say;

Lord I know you hate Pride, your word says you will break the pride of power, and you will make the heavens like iron and the earth like bronze, please Lord....Take my pride from me, humble my heart...let me learn to rejoice in your power and not mine own...

When we pray, we literally enter Heaven, we enter the throne room of God. When Jesus died on the cross, the curtain in the Temple was ripped from top to bottom, signifying the separation between man and God was eliminated because of the blood of Christ.

14 Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 15 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.
Hebrews 4:14-16

Fasting and Prayer

Along with prayer, we have an additional tool called fasting. Fasting adds power to our prayer, it helps us focus and demonstrates to us, how sincere we are about getting rid of our stronghold. Jesus clearly says, some issues require both prayers along with fasting. Referring to the demon possessed boy, who the disciples could not deliver. Jesus said, "*However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting*"(Matthew 17:21).

13 But as for me, when they were sick, My clothing was sackcloth; I humbled myself with fasting; And my prayer would return to my own heart. Psalm 35:13

3 Then I set my face toward the Lord God to make request by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes. Daniel 9:3

37 and this woman was a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. Luke 2:37

In Summary the process of pulling down strongholds is

1. Identify the stronghold
2. Gather intelligence about the stronghold
3. Sever and blockade the supply lines to the stronghold
4. Establish a base camp of friends (warriors)
5. Wage war against the stronghold
 - a. Scripture
 - b. Scripture memory
 - c. Pray God's word
 - d. Pray and fast

My Battle Plan

1. My Stronghold _____

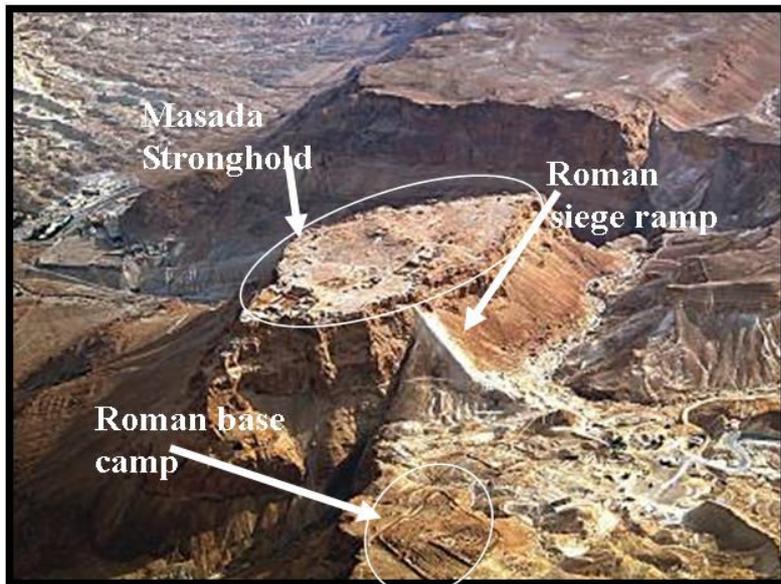
2. Intelligence

1. What is the stronghold in my life? _____
2. How is this stronghold supplied? _____
3. Do people in my life supply this stronghold? _____
4. What in my environment is feeding and supplying the stronghold? _____
5. Am I serious about pulling down the stronghold? _____
6. Am I willing to make myself accountable to Christian friends? _____

3. Sever the Supply lines

4. Who do I know that can help me wage war?

5. What verses apply to the stronghold?



The Fall of Masada²

Masada occupies the entire top of an isolated mesa near the southwest coast of the Dead Sea. The rhomboid-shaped mountain towers 1,424 feet (434 m) above the level of the Dead Sea. It has a summit area of about 18 acres (7 hectares). Some authorities hold that the site was settled at the time of the First Temple (c. 900 BC), but Masada is renowned for the palaces and fortifications of Herod the Great (reigned 37–4 BC), king of Judaea under the Romans, and for its resistance to the Roman siege in AD 72–73.

The site was first fortified either by Jonathan Maccabeus (d. 143/142 BC) or by Alexander Jannaeus (reigned 103–76 BC), both of the Hasmonean dynasty. Masada was chiefly developed by Herod, who made it a royal citadel. His constructions included two ornate palaces (one of them on three levels), heavy walls, defensive towers, and aqueducts that brought water to cisterns holding nearly 200,000 gallons (750,000 l). After Herod's death (4 BC), Masada was captured by the Romans, but the Zealots, a Jewish sect that staunchly opposed domination by Rome, took it by surprise in AD 66. The steep slopes of the mountain made Masada a virtually unassailable fortress.

Following the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Second Temple (AD 70), the Masada garrison—the last remnant of Jewish rule in Palestine—refused to surrender and was besieged by the Roman legion X Fretensis under Flavius Silva. Masada's unequalled defensive site baffled even the Romans' highly developed siegecraft for a time. It took the Roman army of almost 15,000, fighting a defending force of less than 1,000, including women and children, almost two years to subdue the fortress. The besiegers built a sloping ramp of earth and stones to bring their soldiers within reach of the stronghold, which fell only after the Romans created a breach in the defenders' walls. The Zealots, however, preferred death to enslavement, and the conquerors found that the defenders, led by Eleazar ben Jair, had taken their own lives (April 15, AD 73). Only two women and five children—who had hidden in a water conduit—survived to tell the tale. Masada was briefly reoccupied by the Jews in the 2nd century AD and was the site of a Byzantine church in the 5th–6th century. Thereafter, it was abandoned until the 20th century, except for a brief interval during the Crusades; the Arabs called the mountain As-Sabba (“The Accursed”).

A general survey of the ruins was made by Israeli archaeologists in 1955–56, and the entire mountaintop was excavated by Yigael Yadin in 1963–65, assisted by thousands of volunteers from around the world. Descriptions by the Jewish historian Josephus, until then the only detailed source of Masada's history, were found to be highly accurate; the palaces, storehouses, defense works, and Roman camps and siege works were all revealed and cleared, as was the winding trail (the “Snake Path”) on the mesa's northeastern face. A synagogue and ritual bath discovered on Masada are the earliest yet found in Palestine. Among the most interesting discoveries is a group of potsherds inscribed with Hebrew personal names. These may be lots cast by the last defenders to determine who should die first.

In the 20th century Masada became a symbol of Jewish national heroism, and it is now one of Israel's most popular tourist attractions

² Encyclopedia Britannica 1994