

Chapter 21

CASTING DOWN STRONGHOLDS

“I don’t know why I go into these deep depressions”, the woman said to her counselor. “I just spent 3 days in bed so depressed that I wanted to die.” “What precipitated the depression?” asked the counselor. “Nothing,” she responded. “I was just in the kitchen preparing dinner; in fact, I was at the sink peeling some potatoes, and suddenly this awful sinking feeling came over me, and I went to bed.” “Let’s ask the Lord to show us the root of this depression. Just close your eyes and remember how you were feeling when you were in your kitchen. Lord, please give us wisdom.”

In a few minutes the woman started weeping. “Oh! I remember. It was horrible! I was a little girl and my mother had given me a bowl of potatoes to peel. I was terrified of my mother. She was a perfectionist, and was very angry and irrational. I peeled the potatoes as carefully as I could and then took them to her to be inspected. My mother was lying on the couch with a wet towel over her eyes. When she looked at the potatoes she knocked the bowl out of my hands and started screaming that I couldn’t do anything right.”

When a baby giraffe is born, within a few hours it can run 30 miles per hour. God built that ability into it because there are lions around! When a human baby is born, it is totally helpless. It comes out of a warm, safe environment into bright light, pain, noise. Have you seen pictures of new-born babies? They are in shock! They start screaming.

As the mother holds the baby in her arms, gives him his first taste of milk, cuddles him, talks gently to him, he relaxes. Mother and dad give baby the things the food, clothing, and relationship he needs to live. He learns that they are there to meet his needs. He is secure. Over time he internalizes that security and love so even when he is away from them at school, or wherever, he is secure and at peace. He knows he is loved, safe, and secure. He develops a love-based identity. God’s plan for us is that we are nurtured in a loving, healthy family, and our identity has a foundation of love.

During the long Communist reign in Romania, babies by the hundreds of thousands were taken from their parents and “warehoused” in huge orphanages where they had food and warmth but no holding, cuddling, or talking. Many of those orphans, who were deprived of parental love, were stunted emotionally, mentally, and physically, and some died. There are things that can happen to any child that can stunt him developmentally. Some examples are:

- Emotional Abuse – curses, insults, criticism, sarcasm, blaming, scape-goating, control, manipulation, neglect (possibly because of drug or alcohol use by the parents, or because a parent is physically or emotionally sick), abandonment, divorce, or death of a parent
- Physical Abuse - beating, slapping, burning, depriving of food, locking the child in a room, etc.
- Sexual Abuse – incest (sexual abuse of any kind by a member of the family), molestation (sexual abuse by others)

When a child is abused emotionally, physically or sexually, especially in an ongoing basis, the child's heart, the foundation of his life, is deeply attacked and wounded. He (or she) is traumatized again and again, feels deeply rejected, and tremendous fear. He starts perceiving the world differently: "My world is not safe!" He feels terror. He feels powerless. He feels abandoned and betrayed by his parents and by God who did not protect him.

Important: Children take personal responsibility for everything that happens to them! Psychology has all sorts of explanations as to why this is so, but I believe there is a spiritual explanation: There is a devil! He is the accuser! He accuses even the most vulnerable, little children, and when something bad happens to them he tells them, "It's your fault!" So the child grows up with a terrible lie inside: "It's my fault!"

Children who are rejected and traumatized always feel:

Dirty
Damaged
Different

When a trauma occurs in a person's life, and especially in a child's life, whether it is an ongoing trauma of rejection and any kind of abuse by the child's parents, or a one-time trauma of physical or sexual abuse, it causes a breaking inside. (Please see my teaching on TRAUMA.) Spirits from the devil: fear, anxiety, hopelessness, anger, rage, infirmities, can come slithering into the child's heart. Now instead of having a personality based on love and security, the child develops a personality based on fear, a fear-based identity, combined many times with a shame-based identity, and the child feels the necessity to protect himself

Years pass, and the little girl or boy grows up and becomes a Christian. His mind agrees with the preaching and teaching he has heard: "God loves me! I can trust Him!" But his heart, which hasn't been healed, is saying to him: "Are you crazy? You can't trust anyone, and you can't trust God. Remember what your parents did, and God allowed to happen to you." Or, "God is the One who gave me this evil father or step-father. He doesn't really love me. I have to protect myself. I can't be vulnerable by letting my spouse really know my heart. If he knew how dirty and different I am he would leave me. I have to control people, control my environment, so that I won't be abused and rejected again."

The Bible is the revelation of reality, and in a letter from the Apostle Paul to a church at Corinth, God says that Christians, believers, are involved in spiritual warfare. *"For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, 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."* As long as we live on earth, we are walking "in the flesh," in our flesh and blood bodies. But we should not war "according to the flesh." How do humans ordinarily fight and wage war? With their words, and with fists, knives, guns, and other weapons.

Our warfare is spiritual rather than carnal, and it is directed against "strongholds" in people's minds. What is a stronghold? It is defined in the text as an "argument, a high thing" (denoting pride), "that exalts itself against the knowledge of God." Note first that the primary war on earth is in people's minds or hearts. ("Mind" and "heart" are used interchangeably in Scripture.) The pride, rebellion, and self-exaltation in people exist as ideas or thoughts in their minds. Our job as Christ's army is to expose

and take captive these rebellious thoughts in our own mind and in the minds of others.

Let me give a simple definition of a stronghold: a stronghold is a lie in the mind. Picture a coffee pot ready to make the morning's coffee. The coffee grounds are in a filter, in a metal basket, sitting atop a metal tube, above the clear water. When the electricity or gas is turned on, the water heats up, pumping the water through the coffee grounds and filter, and back into the pot. In a person's mind is a filter, but it does not contain coffee grounds, it contains the yuckiest filth imaginable. Think of something scooped up from the bottom of a sewer. These are lies in the mind! They may be lies about God, life, others, self, or a combination of all of these.

James 1:8 talks about "*a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways,*" and says he "*can't receive anything from the Lord.*" He can't receive anything because he doesn't really trust the Lord but keeps Him at arm's length. An ICEBERG has only 7% of its mass above the surface of the water, and 93% beneath and hidden. That is a good picture of the human personality. The 7% of our personality that is above the surface is controlled by our conscious mind, but the 93% below the surface is controlled by the heart. The Bible says that "Out of the heart come the issues of life." We are driven in our conduct and relations with people and our attitude toward God by the things hidden in our hearts, and many times those things that are hidden are LIES! "I am **dirty, defective, damaged, different**. If anyone really knew me, he would reject me. God doesn't really love me."

Let me use the example of Dr. Paul Hegstrom, who shared his testimony, and from whom I have borrowed much of this teaching. Paul said that he was raised in a Christian home, that his father was a pastor but rather legalistic, and his mother was rather cold and rigid and too much concerned with the opinion of others. His mother had a brother who was mentally defective and was a huge man, weighing about 300 lbs. When Paul was 9 years old he was brutally raped by this man, his uncle. Then when he was 12, he was molested for a period of 14 months by a Junior High School teacher.

Paul tried to broach this subject with his mother. He said, "Mother, if my friend Billy was sexually attacked by two different men, what would you think about that?" He tried to explain that the attack did not really happen, but that this was a hypothetical question. His mother reacted emotionally. She said, "What! Billy has been ruined! He will turn into a sex monster. I forbid you to have him as your friend or to even be around him anymore!" Paul was devastated. His worst fears had been confirmed. He was already feeling **dirty, damaged and different**, and now his mother said that his life was ruined. His life went downhill from there - - into alcohol, drugs, pornography, immorality, anger and violence. He turned away from the church. He eventually got married, but was angry and violent toward his wife and children. He divorced his wife, lived apart from his family for 7 years, and moved in with a girl friend. He was violent toward her also, and one day he knocked her down 2 flights of stairs and almost killed her. He was charged with a felony and faced 20 years in prison. He had come to the end of himself. He cried out to God all one night, and God came and spoke to him, told him that he would start healing him and use him in a ministry to others. (This sounds very much like what happened to me.)

Over a period of years Paul was healed, he and his wife got remarried, his whole family has been healed, and God is using him in a tremendous ministry of inner healing. Paul's thesis is: the deeper your wounds, the greater is your call to ministry. Find your mess and you have received your message. This is a Scriptural concept: 2 Corinthians 1: 3, 4, and 6 says: *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God...Now if we are afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation...*

There are 2 things wired into our brains for self-protection:

- (1) FORGETTING. The conscious mind forgets bad, painful, humiliating things that happen to us and blanks it out. (Are there seasons, years from your past that are a blank?) But, the sub-conscious drives people in ways they don't understand.
Example: A physician had the records of 78 girls who had, over a period of years, been admitted to the hospital for treatment of sexual abuse. When he contacted the now grown women, a majority of them did not remember the abuse or even remember being admitted to the hospital.
- (2) DENIAL. When bad things happen to us that shatter our hearts and our desire to live, forgetting and denial keep us alive until someone comes into our life to introduce us to the Savior and Healer who wants to rescue us.

What the sub-conscious, the fear-based personality does when a child is rejected, abused, traumatized:

- (1) Loss of self-respect
 - Loss of sense of security
 - Loss of trust of parents, others, God
 - Doubts truth
 - Fears knowledge. For instance, he won't read the Bible for fear that it will confirm his conviction that he is no good and hopeless.
- (2) Rejection
 - Of self, others, and God
- (3) Self-Protection
 - Becomes a control freak
 - Full of bitterness and rage
 - Lashes out
 - Collects injustices

HOW CAN WE BE HEALED?

1. Forgive those who have wounded and hurt us by:
 - Rejection
 - Abuse
 - Word curses
2. Repent of all judgments
 - Matthew 7:1-2
 - Romans 2:1
3. Honor your father and mother....
4. Break all ungodly soul-ties
5. Renounce lies and shame
 - That you are **dirty, damaged, different**
 - "It was God's will, therefore I cannot trust Him"

6. Receive healing for trauma and for your heart.
7. Receive ongoing ministry and prayer
8. Ask your family and all whom you have wounded to forgive you, and try to arrange further ministry/counseling for them