

# Catch Those Thoughts

## **Introduction:**

II Corinthians 10: 5 “casting down arguments and everything that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,

“When you objectively observe our own thinking with the view to capturing rogue thoughts, you in effect direct your attention to stop the negative impact and rewire healthy new circuits into your brain.” Dr. Caroline Leaf.

## **I). Pulling Down Strongholds**

Strongholds are first established in the mind; that is why we are to take every thought captive. Behind a stronghold is also a lie—a place of personal bondage where God’s Word has been subjugated to any unscriptural idea or personally confused belief that is held to be true.

Behind every lie is a fear, and behind every fear is an idol. Idols are established wherever there exists a failure to trust in the provisions of God that are ours through Jesus Christ. Some of the weapons that pull down these strongholds are:

1. God’s Word, Hebrews 4: 12 & 13 “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. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.

This word power here is energies (en-er-gace) Comparable meaning to the English word energetic.

2. The Blood of the Cross. Revelation 12: 11 “And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to death.
3. The Name of Jesus Mark 16: 17, “And these signs will follow those who believe: In My Name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues.”

## **II). Freeing Yourself From Burdens**

1. II Corinthians 10: 3 - 5
2. Proverbs 4: 20 – 22

**III). Definition of a Stronghold:** an area where most people have the same beliefs, values. An area dominated by a particular group. A protected place where the members of a military group stay and can defend themselves against attacks

1. A fortified place.
2. A place of security or survival.
3. Now let's explore the whole issue of demonic strongholds. First, let's define them. A stronghold is a demonic fortress of thoughts housing evil spirits.
  - A. Control, dictate, and influence your attitudes and behavior.
  - B. Oppress and discourage you
  - C. Filter and color how you view or react to situations, circumstances, or people.

When you entertain thoughts and participate in activities that are **CONTRARY** to the will of God, you open yourself to demonic influence. In those areas you are choosing to appease the flesh rather than walk in faith and in obedience.

When those thoughts and actions become **HABITUAL**, and I stress habitual, you allow a spiritual fortification to be built around that demonic spirit and its influence in your spirit person. You become accustomed to responding to the influence and control of the spirit's voice. In fact you believe it's the voice of your own mind because it sounds just like **YOU!** That's where the deception comes in.

Keep in mind that demons monitor your activities and set up circumstances to tempt you. Then agitate your thoughts and emotions until you're too confused to resist and pray. Instead of turning away from those thoughts because they're nothing that Jesus would think, you give way to the inner struggle between good and evil that Paul refers to in his letter to the Romans. (Romans 7: 18 – 21).

If you are a follower of Jesus, you no longer have to be a slave to your sin nature because you have the power of the Holy Spirit to resist! James 4: 7: "Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

Freedom from demonic assault and oppression is accomplished by submitting ourselves to God, in full obedience to His Word and in complete dependence and trust (v. 8). As we do so, we bring ourselves into agreement with God's Word and will, rejecting the lies of the Adversary and accepting God's promises and evaluation of our situation.

As we resist (stand against) the Devil—renouncing his lies and forsaking our own bent toward sin—we have the given promise of God's Word that the Devil will run or flee from us.

There is no place of comfort for a demon in the presence of a joyfully submitted believer who has determined to fully embrace the Lord Jesus and abide by His Word.

#### **IV). Definition of Strongholds Continued**

A stronghold is a faulty thinking pattern based on lies and deception. Deception is one of the primary weapons of the devil, because it is the building blocks for a stronghold. What strongholds can do is cause us to think in ways which block us from God's best. For example, if you think you have to confess all your sins to everybody you've ever wronged, you'll feel just awful and guilty until you do all that, and even then, you'll probably feel guilty, because you probably forgot many people that you didn't confess your sins to. All unnecessary, and a waste of time, all because you were deceived and thought that you had to do something that you really didn't have to do.

#### **V). Two very Destructive and Common Strongholds**

##### **1. The first one, where you see God incorrectly.**

One of the most popular and devastating strongholds to have, is an incorrect image in your mind of who God is, and how He sees us. People who see God as a taskmaster, live their lives with an unhealthy fear of God. There's a good kind of fear of God, which is more like a holy respect for Him, (Reverence). But there's another kind of fear that is unhealthy that the enemy wants us to have, and it's kind of fear where we see God as a taskmaster, cruel, cold, distant, uncaring and would snap the whip at us the moment we step out of line. People who are afraid they've committed the unpardonable sin are almost guaranteed to have this stronghold. People who find it hard to feel God's love and presence, often have this stronghold too. If you feel God is distant and cold, or question if God loves you, then you need to get this stronghold torn down.

An example of this stronghold at work: A common scene is somebody who is scared of God, and has a hard time feeling His love and presence. They view Him as a cruel taskmaster, and not as the God that He is to them, and therefore, they put up their own wall which makes it hard for them to receive God's love, presence and draw close in their relationship with Him. If you saw your spouse as a rude and cruel dictator, you probably wouldn't be as apt to snuggle unto Him or Her and love them as you would if you saw them as a loving and kind person who loves you and cares for you. If you see somebody mean, it's hard to receive their love, isn't it? That's how our perception of God can hinder us from feeling His love and presence in our lives. It is very important to have a correct perception of God if we want to live victorious lives in Christ Jesus.

## **2. The second one, where you see yourself incorrectly.**

People who suffer from this have a hard time seeing the new person that they are now in Christ Jesus, and often suffer from low self-esteem. They don't understand what Christ did for them, and how it applies to their own life. Common symptoms of this stronghold are guilt feelings (questioning if you've really been forgiven of your sin(s)), low spiritual esteem (they feel like sinners, not saints), they lack spiritual confidence that we are supposed to have in Christ Jesus, they may still struggle with sin (Jesus said that if you keep in His word, which tears down strongholds, you will be free from the power sin has over you – John 8: 31 – 34, and overall you don't feel worthy spiritually and lack the joy of the Lord in your life.

### **V). So How Does Satan Build These Strongholds?**

Revelation 12: 10 reminds us that Satan is the accuser of the brethren. “Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, “Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night has been cast down.

He starts by reminding us of our past failures and sins. He brings up things that we ought not be dwelling upon, and tries to make us agree with him on how badly we failed. We then have the choice to listen and agree with him, or listen to God's Word (which is telling us that those sins have been washed away by the blood of Jesus). If take the devil's bait and begin to meditate on our failures, it will begin to pull us down spiritually and strongholds will develop. We will begin to see ourselves as failures because we've taken the bait and choose to meditate on a lie that the devil as fed us.

Sometimes when we yield to temptation, we find ourselves opening doors for demonic influence. Now that we have given him that opening he is not satisfied, until he tries to use that influence even more. We have to remind ourselves that we have been forgiven and to stand against the strategy of the demonic influence and plead the blood, and as James says resist the devil and he will flee.

### **VI). Strongholds can play a big part of how we feel.**

If we think we are a failure, we will feel like failures. If you think you're hopeless, you will feel hopeless. If you know you are forgiven, you'll feel clean inside. If you constantly think of your past failures, you will see yourself associated with them. If you constantly think of how you have been separated from your past when the Blood of Jesus has washed it away, you will feel bright and clean inside. Changing the way you think can make a big difference in the way you feel.

