

Breaking Free from Past Destroying Strongholds

Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble, and make straight paths for your feet, so that the limb which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed—Hebrews 12:12-13 (NASB)

When we first came to Christ, the joy and anticipation that often results from our first love experience in Christ had a way of overshadowing the wounds of our past. Unfortunately, as we experience hardship, they have a way of resurfacing and compounding the present difficulties. As these wounds resurface, Satan takes full advantage to move in and wreak havoc. Because his purpose is to steal, kill and destroy the work of God in us, it's of the utmost importance that we apply God's healing ability.

Whether we want to admit it or not, most of us have received emotional wounds from the pathways of our past. From the moment of our birth, the sparks began to fly.² We were born and raised in a cruel, imperfect world where wounds came easily. We also have the trial of our faith, which we began to see in the previous chapter. All of this has a way of causing and compounding the pain. We may have even picked up some addictions or bondages along the way, which we must now deal with constructively. It's not God's will for us to be in bondage to our past. We must break free!

We will never have the joy necessary to deal with our current problems and trials until we are free. Remember, it is the joy of the Lord that is our strength.³ Paul recognized that the weight of his past greatly hindered him, so he let it go. We must do the same. There is so much for us to reach forward to with joy and hope, but we must let go of the past before we can anticipate the future.⁴

Are you ready to deal with your past emotional wounds, broken relationships, addictions, and other areas that keep you in bondage from successfully navigating the path before you? If so, there is hope for you. Jesus came to heal the brokenhearted and the oppressed. Just as the Spirit of God came upon Him to heal the brokenhearted, the Holy Spirit is here today to heal and deliver those in bondage. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever.⁵

Luke 4:18 "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed;

None of us are exempt from being emotionally wounded from time to time. However, God desires to heal us completely. It's part of the reason the Father sent His Son, Jesus, into the world, as the above Scripture says—to heal the brokenhearted, proclaim liberty to the captives, and set the oppressed at liberty. Even King David had wounds he needed healing from. So he said, *"For I am poor and needy, and my heart is wounded within me."*⁶

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¹ John 10:10

² Job 5:7

³ Nehemiah 8:10

⁴ Philippians 3:13-14

⁵ Hebrews 13:8

⁶ Psalm 109:22

No matter who we are—businessperson, salesperson, blue collar, construction worker, computer whiz, student, professional, homemaker, mother, father, husband, or wife; life can be ruthless, brutal, and challenging to cope with at times. On the outside, we may look good by putting on a mask to cover the hurt, but the fact remains: the wound is still there and festering.

Some are already healing by openly acknowledging their wounds and moving on. Others have accepted their hurts and heartaches and are dealing with life the best they can but not functioning at full throttle. But then, some can barely perform because of the severity of the wounds inflicted upon them. Is there hope? Is there healing? Is there deliverance from bondages and addictions? The answer is an unequivocal yes because it is God's will and purpose for you!

Major Causes of Most Wounds

The primary causes of most wounds stem from various areas, including parental wounds inflicted by physical, mental, verbal, or sexual abuse. It could be a general meanness in others, broken relationships, significant disappointments, a nasty divorce, molestation, other crimes against you, or a major moral failure such as adultery or abortion. The list goes on.

These wounds have helped to shape the person you are. But unfortunately, their results have had the potential to produce significant strongholds that can render you ineffective and unproductive as you navigate life. When the injuries are so severe, it helps us to understand why many people turn to drugs and alcohol to numb the pain. The problem is they only compound their issues.

Results of Most Wounds?

You may not know how your wounds have affected you and think everything is okay. Here are some indicators as to how you may have affected you:

- Inability to respond to trials with joy and the proper perspective.
- Wounded people hurt others. Does your behavior often injure others?
- You are often filled with anger, bitterness, hate, and violence.
- You tend to repeat the things that happened to you with others.
- You find yourself filled with shame, guilt, and unworthiness.
- You are full of self-condemnation.
- You have low self-esteem—no confidence.
- You often feel lonely and withdrawn and have very few friends.
- You are unable to respond to others correctly.
- You may have eating disorders.
- You are afraid to show love.
- You cannot trust others.
- You have misconceptions about God.
- You seem passive about life.
- You experience a deep sense of despair and depression.
- You have significant addictions to alcohol and drugs.
- You have suicidal tendencies.

These characteristics are areas that clutter our lives and hold us back from becoming the person God has created us to be. Satan will use them to steal, kill and destroy what God wants to impart into your life.⁷

Seeing yourself in some of these areas indicates that you need healing and possibly deliverance. Otherwise, you are impaired from having a life of adventure filled with God's riches and abundance. As we see in the following Scripture, we must lay aside the weight of these wounds.

Hebrews 12:1 Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.

⁷ John 10:10

Breaking Free from Your Past – Destroying Strongholds

Some of these may have become strongholds you are ignoring or not dealing with. Nevertheless, you must forcefully deal with them if you are to break free and get the victory. We must become violent with our faith by taking the kingdom by force.⁸

Webster's dictionary defines a stronghold as a place dominated by a particular characteristic. So you need to ask yourself, "Are any of the characteristics mentioned earlier dominating me?"

In one of his books, Francis Frangipane writes, "*What men call "salvation" is simply the first stage of God's plan for our lives, which is to conform us in character and power to the image of Jesus Christ. If we fail to see our relationship with God as such, we will allow too many areas within us to remain unchanged. Pulling down strongholds is the demolition and removal of these old ways of thinking so that the actual presence of Jesus Christ can be manifested through us.*"⁹

The apostle Paul defines strongholds as speculations or lofty things raised against the knowledge of God. It includes any thinking that exalts itself above God's wisdom and gives the devil a secure place to influence our thought life.

2 Corinthians 10:4-6 For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, ⁵casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, ⁶and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.

Strongholds are not random thoughts or occasional sins. They're areas you're struggling with because you are in bondage and have lost all hope of breaking free.

Receiving Healing and Deliverance

Remember that Jesus came to heal the brokenhearted and set the oppressed at liberty.¹⁰ Therefore, deliverance is necessary when you find yourself severely oppressed by the enemy in any of the areas aforementioned. You will be unhindered in your journey into the invisible realms of God's kingdom by receiving the healing you need.

The First Step

Whether you require healing or deliverance, the first step is to believe in God's desire and will for you to be whole. He desires this in every area of your life. God's intention in saving us was to heal us, body, soul, and spirit. The apostle Paul makes this abundantly clear in his first epistle to the Thessalonians.

1 Thessalonians 5:23 Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Salvation involves more than saving man's soul; it means total salvation for spirit, soul, and body. The Greek words for "saved" and "salvation" are "Sozo" and "Soteria," which reveal to us clearly, God's desire to save us spirit, soul, and body.

These words mean to save, deliver, protect, heal, preserve, do well, be or make whole, and rescue or safety. The chart below shows how these two words are translated in the New Testament.

How Words "Sozo" and "Soteria" are Translated

Health – Survival	Healed	Preserved	Do Well
Acts 27:34	Acts 14:9	2Timothy 4:18	John 11:12
	Mark 5:23		
	Luke 8:36		
Be whole	Made whole	Saved – Save	Salvation
Matthew 9:21-22	Mark 6:56	Mark 8:35, 16:16	Romans 1:16

⁸ Matthew 11:12

⁹ The Three Battlegrounds by Francis Frangipane

¹⁰ Luke 4:18

Breaking Free from Your Past – Destroying Strongholds

Be whole	Made whole	Saved – Save	Salvation
Mark 10:52	Mark 15:30-31	Romans 1:10	2 Timothy 3:15
Luke 8:48-50	Luke 9:56	2 Timothy 3:15	
	Luke 18:42	1 Corinthians 1:21	
		1 Timothy 1:15, 2:15	
		James 5:15	
		Mark 16:16	

Jesus healed all who came to Him when He was here over 2000 years ago and is still willing to heal all who come today. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. His covenant to heal has not changed. Just as He cast out the spirits and healed all who came to Him so that Isaiah's prophecy could be fulfilled by taking our infirmities and bearing our sicknesses, He still fulfills this divine prophecy about Himself today. His will is the same because it is an irrevocable covenant the Father has made with us through His Son.¹¹

Just as Abraham established his faith because of the covenant God made with him, we build our faith when we believe wholeheartedly in the covenant God has made with us through Jesus Christ.

Romans 4:20-22 He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God,²¹ and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform.²² And therefore, "it was accounted to him for righteousness."

The question is, are you thoroughly convinced of God's promise to heal you? We become entirely convinced of God's promise when we know what God's will in the matter is. You need to know that it's God's will to heal you because He established it in the covenant He made with us. **His promise of healing, based on the covenant, is where your faith will come from for healing and deliverance.**¹²

Come Out of Denial

It may be that you have been in a state of denial and have not wanted to face the ugly wounds of your past. If this is so, you will need to acknowledge openly and confess your wounds. It takes courage to face the pain and the ugliness of a wound inflicted upon you, even if you were entirely innocent. You may be trying to smother it with drugs, alcohol, gluttony, eating disorders, or other destructive practices. The problem is the wound is still there and festering.

It's time to make straight paths for your feet by facing the wound's ugliness and receiving the needed healing.¹³ The Holy Spirit desires to shine a light on areas you have been hiding or hurting from, but He needs your cooperation. Our stubbornness and refusal to acknowledge and confess the wound will hinder His work in the healing process. As a result, His Spirit gets quenched in this area of your life.

Luke 8:17 For nothing is secret that will not be revealed, nor anything hidden that will not be known and come to light.

Psalms 51:6-8 Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts, and the hidden part You will make me know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me hear joy and gladness.

As you allow God to uncover wounds festering, you will have the faith to believe with a new sense of freedom as you experience the joy of your salvation fully restored with a renewed and steadfast spirit. You will now be able to continue your journey unhindered.¹⁴

Healing and restoration are the works God wants to do for you as you wait on Him rather than giving up and quitting, as we saw in the diagram from the previous chapter. God is faithful toward you with plans to give you a future filled with hope.¹⁵ You can trust Him!

Forgive and Let Go

After openly acknowledging your wounds, you must forgive those who have sinned against you and ask forgiveness of those you may have hurt from your wounding. Jesus is our supreme example of what it means

¹¹ Matthew 8:16-17

¹² For a study on the Healing Covenant, see: <http://kenbirks.com/healing-covenant.htm>

¹³ Hebrews 12:12-13

¹⁴ Psalm 51:10-15

¹⁵ Jeremiah 29:11

Breaking Free from Your Past – Destroying Strongholds

to forgive those who have hurt us. He was wounded more than any of us can even begin to imagine, yet when He was beaten and crucified, He cried out, “*Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.*” Jesus has admonished us to do the same.

Mark 11:25 "And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.

Colossians 3:12-13 Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; ¹³bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.

Bear in mind that the feelings and emotions of unforgiveness will often try to resurrect themselves. However, standing firm in your faith with a forgiving attitude, regardless of your feelings, will increase your confidence to receive healing. Each time this happens, you say, “No! I have forgiven the person and will continue to walk in forgiveness.” Eventually, the old emotions of unforgiveness disappear as the new feelings of forgiveness take over. By making this confession, you can let go. As with any of these areas, you may need professional counseling to help you walk in the freedom you need.

When we fail to forgive those who sin against us, Satan takes advantage and causes further wounding. The apostle Paul encouraged the Corinthians to forgive lest Satan should take advantage.¹⁶ We cannot afford to give Satan any advantage. He will wreak destruction if we do. In other words, we must follow Jesus’ example and love our enemies by forgiving them.¹⁷

Just because you have forgiven someone does not necessarily mean you must become their best friend. Some people are not safe people to be around. You need to know who the unsafe people are in your life. You can still be cordial and kind without bringing them into your inner circle.

Getting Free from Strongholds

As mentioned earlier, some things are so deeply rooted they become strongholds. It takes a little more work, so we are urged to work out our salvation with fear and trembling.¹⁸ If we are to be conformed to the image of Christ, we must be willing to tackle these strongholds. We must become violent about taking the kingdom by force so that the kingdom of God reigns in those areas rather than the kingdom of darkness.¹⁹

Our allegiance must be to God and His kingdom to break free from the past completely. As a result, we shift our focus to something more important that will now occupy our minds and thoughts. We become more kingdom-focused and make the right choices to bring forth God's blessing and deliverance.

The fruit that comes forth in our lives comprises a series of decisions. When we made choices according to our carnal and selfish appetites, they blocked the flow of God's blessing and abundance in our lives. On the other hand, when we make the right choices concerning seeking the kingdom of God, we release the flow of blessing and abundance into our lives through the law of sowing and reaping.²⁰

Listed below are often typical strongholds to give you an idea.

Common Strongholds

Fear	Apathy	Lukewarmness	Greed
Resentment	Unbelief	Sinful Thoughts	Drugs/Alcohol
Bitterness	Depression	Lust	Pornography
Unforgiveness	Anxiety	Pride	Gluttony

Because we all tend to excuse ourselves so readily, it's hard to discern the areas of oppression in our lives. After all, these are our thoughts, attitudes, and perceptions. Moreover, we tend to justify and defend our opinions with the same degree of intensity with which we justify and defend ourselves.

¹⁶ 2 Corinthians 2:10-11

¹⁷ Matthew 5:44

¹⁸ Philippians 2:12

¹⁹ Matthew 11:12

²⁰ Matthew 6:33

When identifying your strongholds, survey or examine the attitudes in your heart. Every area in your thinking that glistens with hope in God is an area that Christ is liberating. But on the other hand, any system of thought without hope but feeling hopeless is a stronghold that needs pulling down.

When we allow places of darkness to remain, Satan can operate and wreak havoc in our lives. These strongholds become his base of operations from which he launches his attacks. Ephesians 4:27 tells us *not to give place to the devil*. Notice that it says **we are the ones who give him a place of operation**. Are you giving Satan a base to operate by not surrendering to God's authority? The devil flees when we submit to God.²¹

In 1 Samuel chapters 13-14, we find a great example of dealing with a stronghold. The army of Israel could not function because the enemy had control of a stronghold from which they were continually launching attacks upon Israel. The enemy hadn't taken possession of their land yet but could harass and often oppress them because they had control of the stronghold. In the same way, just because we have a stronghold doesn't mean the devil possesses us. Instead, we give him a place to launch his attacks, enabling him to harass and oppress us.

Saul's army was in complete disarray and had been reduced to only 600 men because his soldiers were deserting him in mass numbers. They hid in caves, rocks, thickets, holes, and pits in fear of the Philistines.²² No one in the army had swords except for Saul and his son, Jonathan. The Philistines had taken all of their blacksmiths, resulting in Israel having to go to them to sharpen their plowshare and other tools.²³ They were immobilized because of the stronghold. Are you immobilized in your journey? If so, it's time to break free!

Confessing the Stronghold to Another Begins the Process

A light has to shine on the dark place in your heart for the darkness to leave. When brought to light true deliverance begins to come forth. The light dispels the darkness by confessing the stronghold of sin to another person or a group of people. In doing this, you will need a safe environment to remove your mask and be completely transparent and vulnerable without fear of judgment.

James makes this clear in his epistle: "*Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another that you may be healed.*" Confession does not mean we confess to anyone and everyone, but rather to someone or a small group of people with whom we trust—people to whom we are accountable. By doing so, it shines a light on the area of darkness. Satan no longer has a good launching site from a place of proximity for his attacks. By submitting to God and His Word, he has to flee. Confessing your stronghold could also entail professional counseling or joining a support group that majors on your problem area.

It Takes a Determined Effort

Once you begin the process, the enemy will not leave quickly. Therefore, you must be more determined. We see a great illustration of this when the tribes of Israel were attempting to take possession of the Promised Land. God had given them the command to go forth and to drive its inhabitants out. He not only commanded them but promised them that He would help them.

Joshua 1:9 "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."

With this promise, the children of Israel were to go forth, conquering all of the inhabitants of the Promised Land. But unfortunately, this did not happen in all cases because their enemies were determined to stay.

Joshua 17:12-13 Yet the children of Manasseh could not drive out the inhabitants of those cities, but the Canaanites were determined to dwell in that land. And it happened, when the children of Israel grew strong, that they put the Canaanites to forced labor but did not utterly drive them out.

The children of Manasseh couldn't drive the Canaanites out of the land because they lacked the determination to do so. The Canaanites were more determined to stay. As the tribe of Manasseh got caught up in their ungodly ways, they were filled with a mixture as they mixed with the Canaanites. When we allow

²¹ James 4:7

²² 1 Samuel 13:6

²³ 1 Samuel 14:19-22

strongholds to remain, we experience a mixture and don't completely come out.²⁴ When this happens, it continually gives the enemy a foothold to reinforce the fortress.

Through a determined effort, we are to drive out our enemies. How many of us give place to the devil because we lack the determination to drive him out? It will take a strong, determined effort to drive out the enemies of your flesh and spirit.

Determination is the inner fortitude and strength of character—being disciplined to remain consistent, steady, and diligent regardless of the odds or the demands. It is deciding definitely and firmly or coming to a firm resolution.

Are you committed to tearing down your strongholds where Satan is still wreaking havoc? As the following Scripture shows, God has given you the authority and power to defeat and drive Satan's influence from every area of your life.

Luke 10:19 "Behold, I give you authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you."

If you have strongholds where the enemy is still trying to hold onto you with a determined effort, you will need a revelation and understanding of how great God is and how mighty His power is towards you.²⁵

1 John 4:4 You are of God, little children, and have overcome them because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.

These Scriptures describe God's ability toward us. Therefore, we must believe, confess and act upon them. A great example is from the above example of *1 Samuel chapters 13-14*, where Jonathan confessed his faith to his armor-bearer. He said, "*Come, let us go over to the garrison (stronghold) of these uncircumcised; it may be that the Lord will work for us. For nothing restrains the Lord from saving by many or by few.*"²⁶

Jonathan was filled with boldness and courage as he stepped out in faith according to what he knew God's ability was. We must do the same as we step out in faith and take the kingdom by force. Otherwise, His kingdom will be diminished as the strongholds persist. But, as we are faithful to step out in faith, boldness, and courage, it gives us the determination not to give up but to continue pressing forward until we are free.

Aggressive, Focused Behavior is Necessary

If the kingdom is to reign in our lives, even in those areas that are stumbling blocks to us, we must have an aggressive faith that results in a focused intent on dispelling the darkness within us. It's the violent who take the kingdom by force.²⁷

Paul said, "*To this end, I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.*"²⁸ Therefore, aggressive, focused behavior with intent involves bringing every thought into the captivity of the obedience of Christ.

2 Corinthians 10:4-6 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, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.

Notice what verse six says, "*and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.*" We destroy our strongholds when we obey God and His Word. It takes aggressive behavior with focused intent to do so.

Most strongholds continue because our minds do not agree with God's Word but often exalt themselves against the knowledge of God. David said, "*Direct my steps by Your word and let no iniquity have dominion over me.*"²⁹ He also said, "*Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You.*"

²⁴ 2 Corinthians 6:14-18

²⁵ Ephesians 1:19

²⁶ 1 Samuel 14:6

²⁷ Matthew 11:12

²⁸ Colossians 1:29

²⁹ Psalm 119:133

Breaking Free from Your Past – Destroying Strongholds

When Jesus was tempted, the Word quickly came to mind because He had studied and meditated upon it. Because He took the time to embed it in His heart, it was there. It put the enemy to flight just as it will for us. God gives us the grace to break free from Satan’s hold by embedding His Word into the recesses of our hearts.

Our obedience to God’s Word brings us freedom and deliverance. It puts us in a position to punish Satan by bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.³⁰

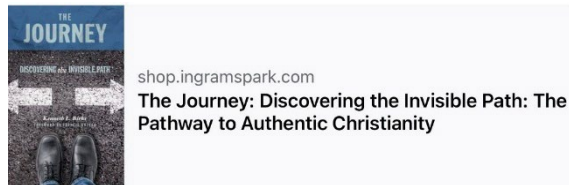
Satan has nowhere to stand when we apply God’s truth. We are pulling the rug out from under his feet, which causes him to be thrown off balance as he hurls his darts at us. They miss the mark, which helps us to break free and continue our journey without being bogged down by our past. The weight is lifted!

The weight is lifted, the wound is healed, the bondage is broken, and we are now ready to pursue our destiny and purpose without weights holding us back.

May God bless you mightily as you deal with the issues holding you back from pressing on with the force of the kingdom. God is with you as you yield to the Holy Spirit in every area the enemy is harassing and oppressing you.



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³⁰ John 8:31-32