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# Invisible Barriers 6

## Ungodly Beliefs

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# Destroying Strongholds: Smashing Thoughts That Bind Pt 1

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Many people are unaware that there is a spiritual battle going on around them every day. Groups and individuals promoting their own thoughts and agendas that directly clash with the truth of Scripture. The Apostle Paul was aware of the battle and told the Corinthians the way that he approached the battle.



For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. *We are* destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and *we are* taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, and we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete. (1 Corinthians 10:3-6)



# We Are at War

Paul warns the Corinthians that there is a war going on. He uses the word for war that speaks of a campaign rather than an individual battle. He is thinking about the scope of the war that is taking place.

The church is being accosted on every side. The same is true today. Our society is working hard to silence the church. You can begin a conversation on many biblical truths and the conversation turns ugly.

Speak about what the bible says about homosexuality and you are instantly demonized. You are homophobic, bigoted, and using hate speech. This strong speech is used to emotionalize the conversation and stop all discussion.

The proponents of homosexuality blatantly and endlessly promote their thoughts and ideas as the truth and attack anyone who disagrees with their statements. They declare that what they are communicating is the truth and anyone who disagrees with them is narrow minded, opinionated, and intolerant.

## It is a Spiritual Battle



The battle we are facing is spiritual. We are not fighting against flesh and blood and attacking people. We are fighting against the philosophies of men, demonic influences, and worldviews that directly contradict God's revealed truth.

Paul states that even though we walk in the flesh we don't war in the flesh. We must approach the onslaught of the world in the power of the Holy Spirit. In Ephesians 6:11-12 Paul encourages:

Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

There are strong spiritual forces behind every philosophy and teaching that is opposed to the word of God. The goal of this type of teaching is to contradict what God has said. It seeks to call God a liar and present the lie as truth.

One of the most blatant examples of this is in the garden of Eden. God declared to Adam that if he ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil . . . you shall surely die (Genesis 2:17). Very clear command with very clear consequences.

When confronted by the serpent in the garden, Eve added to the word of God. She said that God said, "You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die" (Genesis 3:3). She made God's word more restricted and misstated what God had said.

The serpent rejected the truth and confidently contradicted what God said. He said, "You surely will not die" (Genesis 3:4). He goes on to tell Eve that the reason that God doesn't want them to have the fruit is that they will become like God.

The serpent not only contradicted God but put Him in a disparaging light. He was doing it out of insecurity. He was doing it to stop Eve from becoming all she could be.

Eve had a choice to make. Who would she believe? God? Or the devil? Eve was deceived by the words of the serpent and ate the fruit and gave some to her husband. They ate the fruit and died spiritually that day. They were naked, ashamed, filled with fear, and accusing others for the choices they made.

## The Souls of Men Hang in the Balance

The same battle that raged in the garden is taking place right now in the lives of billions of people. All over the world people are determining whether they will believe what God has said or if they will put their trust in the contrary teachings of men.

Just as the devil stood and contradicted God, there are those that stand up and proclaim that what God has said is a lie and they know what is true. God's ways are too restricting and we want to be like God choosing what we believe to be right or wrong.

There are consequences to rejecting God's truth and promoting a lie. Ephesians 2:1-3 explains the state of those who refuse to believe God's truth and live according to the precepts of this world. Paul says:

And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.

Those who choose to reject the truth of God's word are spiritually dead and living according to the "truths" of the world. They are listening to the lies of the enemy and rebelling against the ways of God.

Instead of submitting to the truth of God's word, they reject it and in doing so cut themselves off from the only source of salvation. They live for themselves and do whatever they think is right in their own eyes.

In choosing to reject God's word they are indulging in their own flesh and mind opposing God and coming under His judgment.

## The Enemy's Weapons



Paul gives us a clear picture of the weapons that the enemy is using to wage warfare against mankind and the church. His main weapons all are connected to thoughts, ideas, mindsets, and worldviews.

The devil is using words to wage his war. He is using false ideas to hold people in bondage. He is using philosophies and false religions to keep people in captivity.

This should not come as a surprise since Jesus said of the devil that “there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies” (John 8:44).

The weapons the devil uses to wage battle are words and ideas. He purposefully misleads people with false philosophies and religions to hold them in bondage. We will now look at three ways the enemy promotes his false beliefs.

## Speculations

The first weapon the enemy uses to bring his deceptive viewpoint is through speculations or arguments. The Greek word is *logismos*. There are two important aspects to consider in this word.

The idea behind this word is to bring logic and calculated thought to bear on a topic. It is not just random thoughts thrown at an issue, but a well thought out argument of the rational mind structured to stand against the truth of God’s word.

Other words that convey the idea of *logismos* are mindset, philosophy, or worldview. They include both formal and informal arguments that portray the thought process of men on a topic.

The second aspect of *logismos* is the evil intent behind these thoughts. They are opposed to the word of God and seek to contradict what God has revealed. The Louw-Nida Lexicon describes the word as “fallacious and deceptive reasoning and, by implication, based on evil intentions—“false reasoning, false arguments.”

Dutch Sheets helps us understand the scope of this word in his book *Intercessory Prayer*. He says:

These *logismos* would include philosophies (whether formally identified or unnamed personal ones), religions, humanism, atheism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, racism, intellectualism, . . . materialism, roots of rejection, perversions—anything that causes a person to think a certain way.

God has revealed Himself through creation, His word, and through Jesus Christ. He has made His truth known and men rise up and contradict it through their own reasonings. They say, “It is not so.” Just a few examples should do:

- God says that homosexuality is a sin and an exchange of the “natural function” of a man or woman for that which is “unnatural” (Romans 1:26-27). Proponents of homosexuality argue that this is not true and that it is beautiful when two people are in love with one another.
- God says that the sexual relationship is special and reserved for marriage. Society argues that people should live together and see if they are compatible before they get married.

- God sees abortion as murder. Those in favor of abortion say that it is a woman's right to choose whether or not she should have the baby because it is her body.
- God says through His word that Jesus Christ is the savior of the world and no one can come to Him except through Jesus. There are those that say all religions lead to God and reject the idea that salvation only comes through Jesus.

The list could go on and on as men attempt to contradict what God has called true.

## Every Lofty Thing Raised Up Against the Knowledge of God

Remember that the imagery throughout this passage is one of warfare. The enemy wants to stop the spread of the knowledge of God, so he erects barriers to keep people "protected" from it.

The purpose of these barriers is to keep people from coming to a knowledge of God. It is an active attempt to place a barrier around people that will keep the truth out.

The barriers are erected out of pride. Louw and Nida help us understand the concept behind the word lofty (*hypsoma*). They describe it as "an exaggerated evaluation of what one is or of what one has done—'conceit, pride, arrogance.'"

The resistance and erection of barriers come from a pride that refuses to submit to God. There is a belief that my way is better than God's way. No one can tell me what to do or what is right for me.

Satan rose up in pride and rebelled against God. His plan has not changed from the garden. He arrogantly contradicts the word of God so that people will choose to follow him and not God. He wants men blinded to the truth so he can keep them in his clutches. Second Corinthians 4:3-4 says:

And even if our gospel is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they may not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

This same attitude is one that Jesus encountered in the lives of the scribes and Pharisees. Jesus warns His disciples of the need of humility since whoever exalts himself will be humbled. He begins to pronounce seven sets of woes against their actions. Two verses are especially meaningful in this context. Jesus said,

But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you shut off the kingdom of heaven from people; for you do not enter it yourself, not do you allow those who are entering in to go in. (Matthew 23:13)

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you travel around on sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves. (Matthew 23:15)

The enemy will erect any kind of barrier to stop people from coming to a knowledge of the God.

## Thoughts

The first weapon of the enemy is the big picture reasoning that comprise a philosophy, religion, or a worldview. The second weapon is the barriers he erects to keep people from coming to the truth. The third weapon is specific thoughts directed toward each person.

The Greek word *noema* has a couple of major ideas. The first is a thought that has come about because of the process of thinking. The second is that of a plan or strategy with evil intents. Have you noticed how the plans of the enemy are based on evil intent?

Paul uses the word to describe the schemes of the devil toward each of us. He says, “we are not ignorant of his schemes” (2 Corinthians 2:11). Part of the war plans of the enemy is specific schemes designed to keep you from the truth.

His plan is unique, though similar, for every person. He knows each person and what makes them tick. He then put his plan to work by dropping thoughts in a person’s mind to keep them in the dark.

C.S. Lewis gets to the heart of this strategy in his book *The Screwtape Letters*. The book is about the correspondence between a senior demon in the “lowerarchy” of hell named Screwtape and his nephew, a Junior Tempter learning how to keep the person to whom he is assigned to in the dark and therefore assure his damnation.

Screwtape is constantly telling Wormwood how he should attempt to direct the thinking of his “patient.” If the patient begins to respond and move toward God, there is a constant set of directions in how to countermand what is taking place.

Even though this is a fictional book, it gives insight into how the enemy might operate in the life of a human being. The main goal is to keep a person from coming to Christ. If that fails, the next is to keep him passive and irresponsible in the things of God.

The enemy is constantly attempting to speak thoughts to both unbelievers and believers. His goal is to stop them from experiencing a true knowledge of God.



# Erecting Fortresses



Now that we understand the weapons the enemy uses, we can speak about how he uses them to erect fortresses.

The fortresses the enemy is building is not something physical that one can visit and see. It is comprised of the philosophies, religions, worldviews, multiple barriers, and the specific thoughts used to keep people in darkness.

These fortresses are designed to keep men in and God out. There is great power in ideas. What one believes really matters. These fortresses are not a flimsy house of cards that will fall at a slight breeze. They are strongly entrenched ideas that blind the minds of men and women.

It is possible to look at the condition of the world today and despair. But as believers we are not helpless. God has given us weapons to break down the enemy's fortress.

Next week we will look at the weapons God has provided us and see how we can begin the process of destroying the fortresses in the lives of others and in our own lives.

# Destroying Strongholds: Smashing Thoughts That Bind Pt 2

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Last week we looked at the weapons the enemy uses to build strongholds in the minds of people. This week we look at the wonderful weapons God has given us to destroy the works of the enemy.

## The Weapons of Our Warfare



For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, and we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete. (1 Corinthians 10:3-6)

## Are Divinely Powerful

The first thing that Paul makes clear to the Corinthians is that the weapons he uses to fight against the enemy are not of the flesh. This is vital to remember since we are not fighting against people. The battle we are waging is against the demonic forces that are creating strongholds in the minds of people through speculations, lofty arguments, and thoughts.

We cannot fight a spiritual battle in our own strength. We would lose every time. The devil had been around for a long time and has perfected the schemes he uses to entrap mankind. We can see the evidence of his skill all around us.

The weapons we must use come directly from God, our commander and chief. Just as our current military issues soldiers everything they need for battle, God Himself equips us with everything we need to wage war against the works of the enemy.

We are not as helpless as we feel sometimes. The weapons that God gives us are powerful. They are not dependent upon our strength or ability. They are dependent upon what Jesus has done and the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

We have a big part to play in that we must be willing to pick up and use the weapons God has provided. God has provided everything. We must use the weapons by faith and destroy the works of the enemy.

One of my favorite ways of understanding God's part of the battle and our part of the battle is the words that Moses and God spoke to Joshua as he was about to go into the Promised Land (Deuteronomy 31:3-6; Joshua 1:1-9). God promised that He would go before Israel and drive out the inhabitants of the land. The next thing he does is tell Joshua to be strong and courageous.

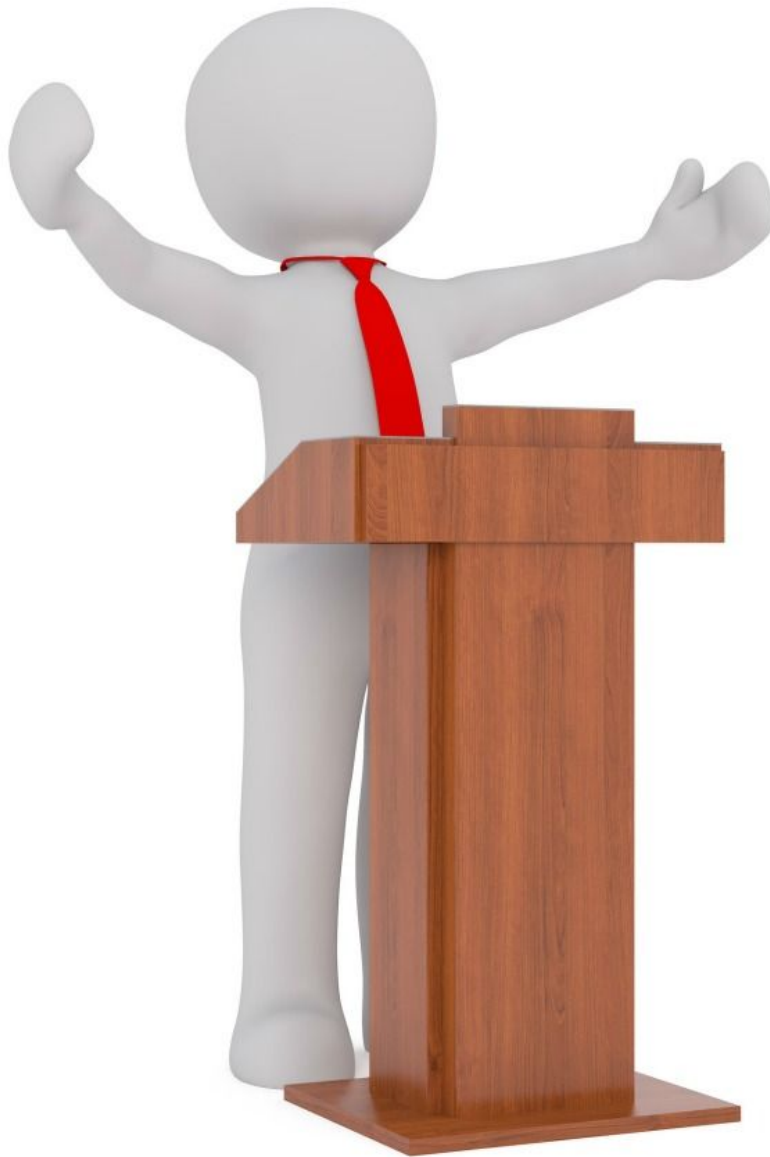
God is the one driving the people out of the land, but Joshua must be strong and courageous and fight the battles that needed to be won. God said that He has given them every place that Joshua would set his foot.

In my mind this means that God gave Israel the whole Promised Land, the only requirement was for them to step forth in faith and take it. Wherever Joshua would lead the people by faith, they would possess it. If they did not step out in faith they would not possess it and the enemy would still be in their midst.

Jesus has done everything that needs to be done on the cross and in His resurrection for salvation. We are saved by His great work. Now we are called to take the land that God has given us.

The lies of the enemy are blinding the minds of men. They will not be set free by worldly wisdom or the strength of men. They will be set free by the powerful weapons that God has provided for us, that is if we are strong and courageous and use them by faith.

## The Gospel



The Apostle Paul boldly proclaims, “I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek” (Romans 1:16).

We can have great confidence in the gospel revealed in Scripture. The gospel is not a man-made message. It originates from the heart of the Trinity before the world was created (Ephesians 4:1-4; Revelation 13:8; 1 Peter 1:20).

This message, which speaks of Jesus being with God, His incarnation, His sinless life, His suffering and death on the cross, His resurrection from the dead, and His second coming has the power to save. It is the only true message of salvation.

## Biblical Truth

In addition to the gospel the bible is full of the truth of God. It reveals God's point of view on many topics.

Let the wicked forsake his way  
And the unrighteous man his thoughts;  
And let him return to the Lord,  
And He will have compassion on him,  
And to our God,  
For He will abundantly pardon.  
“For My thoughts are not your thoughts,  
Nor are your ways My ways,” declares the Lord. (Isaiah 55:7-8)

God informs us that His thoughts and ways are not ours. We must see things as God has revealed them in Scripture. God has chosen to show us who He is through revelation from the Scripture and through the person of Jesus Christ.

We do not have to guess about who God is because He has shown us. Too many of the strongholds holding people are false pictures of who God is and what He is like. Romans Chapter 1 shows us the effects of men rejecting the picture God gives of Himself (Romans 1:18-32).

The only source of truth concerning this world and salvation must come from the word of God. Anything else will lead us astray from the truth. God has given us everything we NEED to know for life and godliness in His word..

## Obedience

Obedience may not initially seem to be a weapon, but it is. When we obey God there is a releasing of the power of God both in our lives and through our lives. Disobedience gives the devil a place in our lives. Obedience breaks the back of the enemy.

Every time we disobey God it gives place to the enemy and affects us negatively. Remember the story of Adam and Eve. They were in the garden naked and unashamed before they chose to disobey God.



The effects were far reaching from one “simple” choice. Once they made the choice to eat the fruit they saw that they were naked. Here is what took place:

- They were now filled with shame and attempted to cover their nakedness.
- Fear entered into their lives and they ran and hid when they heard the sound of the Lord walking in the garden.
- Both Adam and Eve refused to take responsibility for their rejection of God’s command.
- Adam blamed God and Eve for his disobedience.
- Eve became a victim and said that the serpent deceived her.
- The ground was cursed.
- Women would bring forth children in pain.

The importance of obedience can be seen in the life of Jesus. Here are a few passages that describe His response to God and the Spirit:

Therefore Jesus answered and was saying to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner. (John 5:19)

So Jesus said, “When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me. (John 8:28)

For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.(Hebrews 4:15)

I will not speak much more with you, for the ruler of the world is coming, and he has nothing in Me; (John 14:30)

Jesus never disobeyed and rebelled against God. Even though He was tempted and struggled in the garden knowing He was going to the cross. He always fully obeyed God.

Did you notice what Jesus said in John 14:40? The ruler of this world, the devil, was coming and he had nothing in Him. He was squeaky clean and the devil could not influence His life at all. Disobedience gives place to the devil.

## Prayer



Once we are armed with a knowledge of the truth of the gospel and God's word, we are now ready to put into use the weapon of prayer. Prayer is one of the most powerful weapons that we have in our arsenal.

It is through prayer that we exercise the authority that God gave us to bring this world under His authority. John Wesley said, God does nothing except in response to believing prayer." God is waiting for us to pray in order to move in this world.

Jack Hayford put it this way in his excellent book on prayer called *Prayer: Invading the Impossible*. He has a chapter called "If We Don't, He Won't." In it he discusses the very concept we are considering.

He reminds us that God put man in charge of this world. Man is responsible to ask, seek, and knock for the things God desires to do in this world. Prayer is the thing that moves God's hand in this world. Pastor Jack says:

Prayer can change anything. The impossible doesn't exist.  
His is the power. Ours is the prayer.  
Without Him, we cannot.  
Without us, He will not.

The concept is clearly taught by Jesus. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus taught His disciples to pray, "Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." (Matthew 6:10). They were to ask for heaven to come to earth.

As believers in Christ we are to stand in the authority of Jesus and pray for His power and might to come into situations we face on this earth. In the context of dealing with strongholds, we are to take authority over the lies that are blinding people from the truth and pray for revelation to come to a person so they can respond to the truth. We'll see how powerful prayer is later when we deal with the actual process of destroying strongholds.

Prayer releases the power of God into a situation and into the lives of those captured in the strongholds of the enemy. Our prayers have the power to change the lives of individuals, neighborhoods, cities, nations, and the world.

Next week in part three we will look at how we use our divine weapons to destroy strongholds. Hope to see you there!

# Destroying Strongholds: Smashing Thoughts That Bind Pt 3

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Last week we saw that the weapons God gives us are divinely powerful. This week we get to see how these weapons destroy the strongholds of the enemy and set others and ourselves free.

## The Weapons of Our Warfare

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, and we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete. (1 Corinthians 10:3-6)

## Destroy Fortresses

Now we are getting to the fun part. Maybe I am too much of a guy, but I like to destroy things. One of my favorite tools is a sawzall (reciprocating saw for those with a more refined upbringing). Just give me one those babys and set me loose and I am one happy guy.



The word destroy in the Greek lines up pretty well with the English word destroy. It means to violently pull down, tear down, or demolish. Remember that we are destroying speculations and lofty things exalted above the knowledge of God, not people.

The weapons God gives us are to be used destroy every lie and false precept that does not align itself with the truth of God. We are to tear down stone by stone the walls of lies erected against the truth of God and set people free.

We must also look at our own lives and thoughts and make sure that they align with the truth. If we find anything that is out of line with what God has says we must repent and come into agreement with God.

There are four major weapons God gives us to destroy strongholds: the gospel, the truth of God's word, prayer, and obedience. We will look at the first in this post

## We Destroy Strongholds by Sharing the Gospel



The purity of the gospel has been under attack from the very beginning of the church. There were always those who perverted the gospel and sought to change the truth of it. In 1 Corinthians 1:18-25, Paul gives us some insight into why this is so:

18 For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. 19 For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the cleverness of the clever I will set aside."



20 Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? 21 For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. 22 For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom; 23 but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, 24 but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. 25 Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

To those in the world the gospel is seen as foolishness.

### The Jews were looking for signs.

They wanted to see the power of God. They saw the crucifixion of Jesus as a weakness. If He were the true Messiah, He would never have gone to the cross, because cursed is he who hangs on a tree.

### The Gentiles sought wisdom.

They were looking for fine philosophical truths that tantalized their minds and thought processes. They saw the crucifixion as foolishness. This makes no sense. Why would someone dying on a cross have anything to do with me? They rejected it because it did not line up with what they were looking for.

So when the gospel does not line up with what people want, they reinvent the gospel. That is what happens in Galatia.

Paul wrote His first letter that is in the Bible to the church at Galatia. There was a group of people who were preaching another gospel. They were saying that Gentiles must be circumcised and follow the Law of Moses to be saved.

### Paul Fiercely defends the gospel

Paul was furious and let them know it. Listen to what he had to say:

6 I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; 7 which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. 8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! 9 As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed! (Galatians 1:6-9)

Changing the gospel is very serious. Paul said that anyone who preached another gospel than that which was already given was accursed. That means that the person is given over to the judgment of God and is dedicated to destruction.

To change the message of the gospel is to risk the judgment of God. The reason there is such a strong penalty is that a false gospel leads people astray and to their own destruction. We must stand strong and proclaim the message of the gospel.

## Distortions of the Gospel



### Legalism

There are many ways that the gospel can be misrepresented. One is called legalism. Legalism is living by a set of rules and laws rather than by faith in God. That was the trouble in Galatia.

Maybe you have experienced something like this. Years ago I worked at a Christian Bookstore in addition to being a pastor. I had people from a local church come in and try to lead me to Christ.

When I told them that I loved the Lord and was a pastor in town the first thing they asked is what Bible I used. I said the New American Standard. I was quickly told that this was not the right Bible and the only Bible that was right was the King James Version.

They would leave me tracts on top of the cash register when they left. I was asked how I was baptized and many other things. Through many conversations it came out that they really believed that they were the only true denomination and church that was following the Lord completely.

They were trying to get me saved so I could come to their church, be baptized in their church, and use their official translation.

Now I am not saying that these people are going to hell, but they are surely living very legalistically if they think that their church and their doctrine and their translation is the only right one.

## Antinomianism

Sorry, I just had to use that word. After all I did go to school for a long time and have to use that knowledge sometime time somewhere.

The word simply means without law. It is the exact opposite of legalism. Have you ever noticed how there are always extremes on the left and the right and the truth of God's word is somewhere in the middle?

Antinomianism says that Christ has set us free from the law. We are not under the law and can do what we want. We are free. We can drink, do drugs, have sex outside of marriage. These things do not affect our salvation.

## Stay True to the Gospel



Paul has something to say to those who who feel free to continue walking in sin after coming to Christ. He says in Romans 6:12-18:

12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, 13 and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. 14 For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

15 What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be! 16 Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? 17 But thanks be to God that though you

were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, 18 and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

There are many more ways to pervert the gospel of Jesus, but this will do for this post. The point is that we must remain true to the gospel of Jesus Christ because that is the only thing that saves people.

We can never change the truth of the gospel to try and make it more relevant or to be the way that we want it. Sure people may be offended or think what we are preaching is foolish, but we must remain true to the gospel or people will perish.

We already heard this verse last week but it worth repeating here. Paul said:

I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. (Romans 1:16).

When we water down and change the gospel, people's lives are at stake.

Next week we will look at weapon number two in our arsenal: the truth of God's word.

P.S. Remember that the power of the gospel is not in our persuasive words but in the message we present. Our goal is not to be wise like the world, but to be wise in the things of God.

# Destroying Strongholds: Smashing Thoughts That Bind Pt 4

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God gives us powerful weapons to pull down strongholds in people's lives. The first weapon we looked at was the power of the gospel. The second weapon we will look at today is the truth of God's word.

## Staying True to the Bible

### The Bible is the Inspired Word of God

The Bible is God's word to us. It is literally inspired (God-breathed) by Him.

16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; 17 so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.



God has given us His word so we can learn how to live godly in this world. His ways are the true ways. We must learn to allow the word of God to shape what we think and believe.

The word has four things that are profitable for us.

- Teaching (showing us what is right - deals with the truth)

The word of God shows us God and His ways. In it God reveals Himself and His plan for how to live a godly life of fruitfulness.

- Reproof (showing us what is wrong - deals with sin)

The Bible shows us what is right and what is wrong. God is the creator and has determined what is wrong and what is right. He wants us to trust in Him. Adam and Eve wanted the knowledge of good and evil and it caused them and it caused them to sin against God.

The idea of reproof is that the Bible brings us conviction and shows what is wrong in our lives. This is a great gift from God that can show us our need to repent and turn to Him.

- Correction (showing us how to get right - deals with error)

Correction deals with restoring our lives to an upright state. Correction adjusts our thinking and actions to line up with God's truth.

- Training in righteousness (showing us how to stay right - deals with right living)

The Bible is given to help us learn how to walk God's way in this world. A simple way of understanding the word righteousness is living life according to God's truth.

Lawrence O. Richards provides this insight: "When a person is said to be 'righteous,' no suggestion of sinlessness is implied. Instead, the statement implies actions in harmony with one's obligations in his or her relationship with God."

Richards goes on to say, "The NT shifts emphasis from a righteousness linked to human behavior to a righteousness that God provides." God imputes righteousness to us as believers through faith and empowers us to live a life that is pleasing to God.

## Man Twists the Word of God



We've already seen how some people exchange the gospel of Jesus for another gospel. There are also those who seek to change some of the teachings of the Bible to be more compatible with their view of God.

Paul admonished Timothy to study the word of God in order to teach it accurately, because there are some who will not. He says in 2 Timothy 2:15-18:

15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth. 16 But avoid worldly and empty chatter, for it will lead to further ungodliness, 17 and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, 18 men who have gone astray from the truth saying that the resurrection has already taken place, and they upset the faith of some.

Paul likens the teaching of Hymenaeus and Philetus to a spreading gangrene. They have gone astray from the truth and have damaged the faith of some through their false teaching.

This is a sad situation, but the problem still persists in our day. There are those who refuse to believe what the word of God clearly states and exchange their own thoughts for the word of God.

I will give one example of how many evangelicals are now turning away from the idea of hell. I am going to use some quotes from one of many similar articles available on the web. I will not use the author's name, so you think I am bashing a person.

I want to show how easy it is to put one's own thoughts and feelings above what scripture says. I will discuss the thoughts in two areas: First, the idea that hell does not fit their idea of a loving God and, second, hell is repugnant to their understanding of justice and fairness.

## Hell does not fit their idea of a loving God

One of the main problems people have with hell is that it seems so bad. The idea that God would send people to hell and "eternal, conscious torment" goes against their understanding of God as loving. A loving God would never do such a thing.

They consider the doctrine of hell to be a "prefabricated evangelical filter" on scripture that if abandoned the person will come to an understanding that hell is not what a person thinks it is, despite the fact that "there are some verses that seem to hint or describe eternal torment."

Here are a few quotes that explain why they believe God would not punish people forever in hell.

- "... torturing people *seems* to be contradictory to His character."
- "The idea that the end result of rejecting God's love will be a slow-roasting eternal torture session with Jesus at the controls, is almost asinine."
- "This is *not* the Jesus we find in the New testament."
- "The Jesus we find in the New Testament is loving and just--but not dementedly cruel."
- "Jesus would become a hypocrite, demanding that we nonviolently love our enemies while He does the complete opposite."
- "Torture is not loving."

## The idea of hell goes against their personal sense of justice and fairness

The second reason people desire to change the biblical idea of hell is that it doesn't seem fair and they would never do that to a person. The idea of hell seems too cruel and too long for them to accept.

Here are some quotes that show they are putting their feelings of right and wrong above what Scripture teaches.

- "Something in our spirit tells us that torturing people is morally wrong."

- “We simply cannot get past the idea that we are more gracious and merciful than Jesus Himself.”
- “This is a key area I cannot reconcile with eternal punishment.”
- “I could never make the call to sentence one to torture or ‘pull the switch’ to commence torture, because seeing people suffer is something that disrupts my spirit.”
- “There’s just no possible way I could ever sentence people to eternal torture.”

## The Bible and Eternal Judgment



The Bible does speak of eternal judgement in many verses. Here are some of them:

“Then He will also say to those on His left, ‘Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels;” (Matthew 25:41)

These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.” (Matthew 25:46)

6 For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, 7 and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed

from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, 8 dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, 10 when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed—for our testimony to you was believed. (2 Thessalonians 1:6-10)

Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, 2 of instruction about washings and laying on of hands, and the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment. (Hebrews 6:1-2)

Now I desire to remind you, though you know all things once for all, that the Lord, after saving a people out of the land of Egypt, subsequently destroyed those who did not believe. 6 And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day, 7 just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, since they in the same way as these indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh, are exhibited as an example in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire. (Jude 5-7)

And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image; these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone. (Revelation 19:20)

And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. (Revelation 20:10)

14 Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. 15 And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. (Revelation 20:14-15)



Jesus spoke of eternal judgement



Jesus never went along with the crowd or portrayed something that was not true as true. He constantly confronted the wrong views of man and communicated the truth of God's word, even when people did not want to hear it.

In Matthew 25:46, Jesus speaks of both eternal punishment and eternal life. We understand eternal life as being forever, so why should we take eternal punishment to mean anything less than eternal?

If we believe that God is good and just then we have to understand that there is a reason behind this judgment and that it is just. Instead of making Jesus into something He is not, why not believe that there is eternal judgment because he said so?

## Jesus is a Righteous Judge

One of the problems with saying that Jesus is a hypocrite and unloving if He sends people to hell is that He is the righteous judge of creation. He must bring justice and be loving at the same time.

Look at all of the destruction that our world faces daily because of the rebellion of man against God. Murders, thefts, oppression, infanticide, sex traffic, and the list could go on and on. God must bring justice for the things that were done and He will.

Matthew 25:41, 46; Revelation 19:20; and 20:13-15 are set in the courtroom of God. He is judging people according to their deeds. If anyone's name is not written in the book of life they are cast into the lake of fire, which Revelation 20:10 says there will be torment day and night forever and ever.

Maybe the author of the quotes above could not "throw the switch," Jesus does. In the role of the judge He can love man, continually extend His love toward them, and even desire that they come to salvation; but rule them guilty of their rebellion against God and for their unjust actions.

In order to be good, Jesus must be just. His justice does not have to line up with our idea of right and wrong. He has the whole picture, we have just what He has revealed. If we knew what God knows, we would understand why His ways are just.

## Jesus is not a hypocrite when He brings judgment

One of the main arguments against hell is that it is offensive to a person's sense of right and wrong. Jesus would never do or allow anything like this to happen because He went to the cross and paid it all and is loving.

If we limit Jesus to just loving His enemies, we forget that He is a judge who must bring justice. Even after His death and resurrection, God pours out His righteous judgments on people. I will list a few to show that He is indeed not a hypocrite, but bringing justice through His understanding of a situation.

- Ananias struck dead for lying to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:5)
- Sapphira struck dead for lying to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:10)
- God brings judgment on King Herod - "And immediately an angel of the Lord struck him because he did not give God the glory, and he was eaten by worms and died." (Acts 12:23)
- Jesus warns Jezebel and her followers that He will "kill her children with pestilence" if they do not repent. (Revelation 2:22-23)
- The majority of the book of Revelation describes the wrath of God being poured out upon the world because of its rebellion against God.

## Scripture Over My Feelings



Can I be honest? Some of these things trouble me too. I don't like to see people coming under the wrath of God and being punished for their disobedience. It makes my head swim. But that does not mean that I can change God or what He says is about to happen to make myself more comfortable.

Nor can I just choose some scriptures over others. I cannot just look for the Scriptures that line up with what I want. If I am going to be true to scripture, I must take all the verses and understand them all together.

If we overemphasize one aspect of God over another, we get a distorted view of God. If we overfocus on love we get a God who does not punish people. If we overfocus on judgment we get an angry God who has no love for people. If we focus on the whole of scripture we get a God who loves people and is not willing for any to perish but who must judge rebellious mankind according to their deeds.

It is a dangerous precedent to take Scripture and align it with our sensibilities. Remember that Paul said the gospel is foolishness and weakness to those who do not believe, but the power of God and the wisdom of God to those who believe.

This is just one example we could use to show how Scripture is changed from what is revealed to what a person desires it to say. The point is that we allow must God's word to portray what is true and not our own personal feelings.

Next week we will look at the powerful weapon of prayer.

# Destroying Strongholds: Smashing Thoughts That Bind Pt 5

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## There is Power in Prayer.



Prayer is powerful. More powerful than many believe.

I say that because prayer meetings are the least attended service at most churches. If people actually believed in the power of prayer, they would join together and seek the face of the Lord for His will to be accomplished on the earth.

Prayer is powerful. It is one of the greatest weapons that we have in our divine arsenal. Our prayers have the ability to affect the thoughts of people, especially in the area of ungodly beliefs.

Now when I say that prayer can affect the thoughts of people, I am absolutely not talking about mind control or any such thing. Prayer does not control what people believe and think.

Our prayers invite the presence of the Lord into a person's life and helps to expose the lies that they believe so they can be set free.

The crazy thing about believing a lie is that we think it is the truth. No one purposefully goes out to seek lies and deception. They really believe that what they think is the truth.



Therefore, our prayers must be directed toward the lies that people believe. We must ask for God to reveal the lies and help people see the truth.

Hear again what Paul told the Corinthians:

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, and we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete. (1 Corinthians 10:3-6)

Remember that the stones that make up the walls of the strongholds that keep people in bondage are made up of speculations, lofty things exalted against the knowledge of God, and thoughts that plague. It is the lies about God and His ways that keep people from responding to God and from receiving the truth.

## Prayer Brings Heaven to Earth



There is a prayer that is prayed every day by millions of Christians. It is called the Lord's prayer and is found in Matthew 6:9-13.

“Pray, then, in this way:  
'Our Father who is in heaven,  
Hallowed be Your name.  
10 'Your kingdom come.  
Your will be done,  
On earth as it is in heaven.  
11 'Give us this day our daily bread.  
12 'And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.  
13 'And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil.  
[For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.]”

The disciples often saw Jesus go away from the crowds to pray. One day as Jesus was praying His disciples asked Him to teach them how to pray. Jesus' response was an abbreviated version of the prayer above.that does not include the words “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

I believe that Jesus was not giving the disciples a prayer to say by rote, since the other prayer was not exactly the same. I think He is giving them broad areas of prayer to consider. Prayer includes:

- Worshiping the Father
- Inviting His kingdom rule and power to come into situations
- Discerning and asking for God's will to be accomplished in people's lives
- Requesting His provision for our lives
- Staying current with God and with others in the area of forgiveness
- Wisdom to navigate the world in which we live
- Dependence on God for power to overcome evil

## Thy Kingdom Come



For our purposes we want to look at two of the aspects of prayer revealed above. The first is inviting God's kingdom to come. What in the world does that mean?

The word kingdom means a king's domain. It is where the authority, dominion, power, and rule of a king is felt. Jesus tells us to ask for God's kingdom to come to earth.

One thing that confuses many people over this issue is that God is called Lord of heaven and earth by Jesus (Matthew 11:25; Luke 10:21). If this is true, then why do we need to ask for His kingdom to come from heaven to earth?

The main reason is that God gave man authority over the earth. Man was told to go forth and subdue the earth and . . . "rule over every living thing that moves on the earth." When Adam and Eve disobeyed God Satan usurped their authority and became the ruler of the world.

We don't have space here to go into detail about this concept but we did cover it before in the following posts:

[Evidence of an Invisible World](#)

[The Effects of the Fall](#)

[Satan Becomes Ruler of This World](#)

Or episodes [three](#), [four](#), and [five](#) in the audio blog

The world is such a mess because it has rebelled against God's ways and gone its own way. All the evil, violence, hatred, and injustice that we see is a result of God's rule not being established. That is why Jesus taught us to pray for the kingdom of God to come.

We are to bring the authority, power, and dominion of God to this earth as His representatives. When we see something amiss, we are to invite God's kingdom to come into the situation.

The ministry of Jesus was ushered in by John the Baptist. He boldly proclaimed, "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:2). He was telling the people that the rule and reign of God was here and available.

When Jesus began His ministry, He preached the same message. He said, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe the gospel" (Mark 1:15). He proved the kingdom was available by preaching the gospel, performing signs and wonders' healing the sick, and casting out demons.

Jesus gave the twelve authority to cast out unclean spirits and heal every kind of disease and sickness. He told them, "As you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. Freely you received, freely give'" (Matthew 10:7-8).

Jesus appointed and sent out seventy more disciples and sent them to various cities and told them to ". . . heal those in it who are sick and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near you.'"

All of the examples above show people ministering to others and proclaiming that the kingdom is near or come. They were to heal the sick and cast out devils. In other words, the message of the kingdom being near is the message of the power of God to break into the lives of people and deliver them from what harms them.

Now let's consider once again that Jesus taught us to pray "Thy kingdom come." Not only can we minister the kingdom through the words and ministry we share with others, we can do it through prayer.

Prayer is powerful. When we pray for specific people in dire situations, we are asking God to bring His miraculous power into the situation. We have authority to pray this way from Jesus. Let's use this divinely powerful weapon to destroy strongholds that are holding people in captivity and darkness.

## Thy Will Be Done



The second aspect we want to consider from the Lord's prayer is asking for God's will to be done.

This is a vital part of understanding how we are to pray. We are to pray His will.

If you're like me, just saying the words "pray His will" brings to mind the story of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane. In the garden Jesus went through the most difficult time of His life on earth.

He was facing the cross and the pressure of all that was shortly to happen to Him was crushing Him down. He prayed so fervently that blood flowed from his forehead. He earnestly asked God for another way, but if there was not another way Jesus said "not My will, but Yours be done."

Some things are fairly clear on what God's will is and others take some prayer to discern what He desires.

For example, from the verses in this post we see that God desires to heal people and cast demons out of people's lives. He also desires that none perish. Therefore we can confidently pray for a person's salvation.



The level of our asking is heaven itself. Jesus said we are to pray for God's will to be done on earth as it is in heaven.

This type of prayer is not begging God to come and do something like He is somehow resistant and must be moved upon to act. Since believers have authority given by Christ to rule on the earth, we must invite Him to do what needs to be done.

We are His authorized agents in the earth. We must understand His will and then pray for it to be accomplished.

Prayer does not twist God's arm and make Him do something. He is more than willing to pour out His glory in a situation, but He must be asked first.

This idea troubles some people. They think that if we pray this way it means that we are somehow controlling or commanding God to do something. No Way!

Prayer is cooperating with God. We are seeking out His will and praying for it to come to earth as it is in heaven. I'm not making this up. Jesus told us to pray this way.

## Prayer Destroys Strongholds



Our prayers have the power to demolish the strongholds in the minds of people that are holding them captive. We can pray against the strongholds of speculations, lofty things raised against the knowledge of God, and thoughts that blind people.

This type of ministry is directly in line with the ministry of Jesus. Here are a few verses that describe the purpose behind His coming:

“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” (Mark 10:45)

“For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.” (Luke 19:10)

“It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all.” (1 Timothy 1:15)

“You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.” (Acts 10:38)

“The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil.” (1 John 3:8b)

“I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.” (John 10:10)

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me,  
Because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor.  
He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives,  
And recovery of sight to the blind,  
To set free those who are oppressed,  
To proclaim the favorable year of the Lord.” (Luke 4:18-19)

Want to know the exciting thing about the scripture from Luke? It is that Jesus came to proclaim liberty to those who are captives. The word for captives is not that of prisoners in a jail. It is used to describe prisoners of war that are dragged away into exile by a conqueror.

Our prayers help destroy the demonic fortresses that entrap people and hold them in bondage. Through prayer we can take the thoughts captive as prisoners of war and see people come to a knowledge of the truth.

The following verse in Timothy speaks of how Satan can hold people captive.

24 The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, 25 with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, 26 and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will. (2 Timothy 2:24-26).

Now I realize that this verse is not talking about prayer but speaking to a person face to face. Yet I wanted to include it to show you how Paul understood that the devil can ensnare people with lies that hold them captive to His will.

Our prayers can destroy strongholds that hold people in captivity and bring them into the light of a true knowledge of God.

Next week we will take a look at another weapon of prayer and I'll explain how we can specifically pray for believers, unbelievers, and for ourselves to destroy any strongholds that are holding us back from God's truth.

# Destroying Strongholds: Smashing Thoughts That Bind Pt 6

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Prayer matters. Prayer makes a difference. Prayer prepares the way. Prayer changes things. Prayer is powerful. Prayer is a weapon. Prayer breaks strongholds. Prayer is joining forces with God. Prayer brings blessing. Prayer releases life. Prayer brings heaven to earth. Prayer is a partner to action.

## Praying Purposefully

Charles Finney, Daniel Nash, and Abel Clary understood and implemented the power of prayer.

Finney was one the voices of the Second Great Awakening (1790-1830's). God moved through him powerfully to bring many to the Lord. Yet he knew that his preaching was not enough. He knew the importance of prayer.

Daniel Nash was a Presbyterian minister better know as Father Nash. He was a man of prayer. For the last seven years of his life he became a personal intercessor for Finney. He was later joined by Abel Clary.



Nash would go to a town a couple of weeks before Finney was scheduled to preach. He would try and find two or three people who would join him in prayer and begin to intercede.

He would pray for God to come and move in the hearts of the people preparing them to receive the word of God Finney would preach. He would pray for hours at a time, sometimes days.

There is a story of a concerned owner of a boarding house that came to Finney when he arrived in town. She spoke of how Nash had not been out of his room for three days. He had not been down to eat and she heard groaning in his room.

She decided to check in on him to make sure he was alright. All who were in the room were lying prostrate on the floor and groaning in prayer.

Nash would make a prayer list where he would pray for people every day, sometimes multiple times a day. He would choose the worst sinners in the region and pray for their salvation. His prayers brought great results.

Nash and his companions prayed until they broke through and then they continued to pray. They rarely attended any of the meetings because they were praying. God heard their prayers.

I believe God has heard my prayers. He will make it manifest in His own good time that He has heard me. I have recorded my petitions that when God has answered them, His name will be glorified.

-----George Muller-----



# Praying Positively



I've been involved in weekly prayer meetings for well over thirty years. Some of them were good and others not so good.

There was a season in our church prayer meetings when it seemed that all we did was focus on the negative. The prayers would go something like this:

Lord, the world is getting worse. There is so much darkness. People are being killed in all the wars. Drugs are on the rise. Abuse is rampant. Kids are committing suicide. Oh God, we need Your help. Etc. Etc. Etc.

I call this type of prayer "complaining prayer." It is when we give God a list of all the evil that is going on in the world and feel overwhelmed and somewhat helpless to do anything about it. We are despairing that things are so bad and so bleak. The world is just continually getting worse and worse.

I would come into the prayer meetings feeling pretty good and go home feeling somewhat depressed. I started wanting to skip the prayer meetings so that I wouldn't have to hear this type of prayer. I never skipped a meeting, but I wanted to.

I know that there are prayers of complaint throughout the Bible. Many of them are in the book of Psalms. So I started to look into these prayers to figure out what is going. I saw that David had quite a few Psalms of complaint.

David had terrible things going on in his life. There were many foes trying to kill him and he would complain to the Lord. I started noticing that there was a trend in how David prayed.

Then it hit me. When David poured out his emotions to the Lord he would always end it with his absolute confidence that God was going to protect him. God would not allow his feet to slip or his enemies to capture and kill him. He could lay down in sleep and peace because God would protect him.

That changed everything. I put together a sheet to hand out and encourage people to pray positively. Instead of focusing on the negative, I encouraged us to focus on the positive.

## Praying the Solution



Instead of praying the problem, we would pray God's solution.

When we only focus on evil, we allow the evil of the world and the works of the enemy to be the focus and the thing that moves our prayer. We are now responding to darkness rather than responding to the Lord. Evil sets our prayer agenda, not the Lord.

Jesus never allowed circumstances to dictate His movements. He was directed by the Spirit.

I began to see that we could pray the solution rather than the problem. Instead of praying negatively about what we wanted to see stop, we could pray positively for the things we wanted to see happen. This changed everything.

I think that this is partly what Jesus meant when He told the disciples to pray “Thy Kingdom come Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

We are to see what God is up to in heaven and pray for that to be accomplished on the earth. We pray and declare the positive and powerful things that God wants to do in the lives of people.

I relearned this lesson a couple of weeks ago. In studying 2 Corinthians 10:3-5, I began to pray for a couple of friends. I wanted to destroy all of the strongholds I thought were holding them back in their walk with Jesus.

I began to pray for this negative thing to break off of their life and for that negative thing to go. After I finished I felt somewhat dirty as if I had done something wrong. It was not pleasant. I was focusing on the negative rather than the positive.

That little episode got me thinking again about praying positively. I would never pray the prayer I prayed at home in public for it would dishonor my friends and bring focus on their shortcomings (we all have them, including me). I had to pray a different way. I had to pray positively. I had to pray the solution.

## Praying with Paul

This incident got me thinking about the prayers of Paul. Many years ago I heard a teaching by Mike Bickle on Apostolic Prayer. He mentioned the many different places where the apostles would pray for the churches they were writing to.

I decided to do more research and found a pdf called “Key Apostolic Prayers and Prophetic Promises.” It is a two-page list of scriptures that the apostles prayed for believers in the church. ([Click here](#) to see the list)

These prayers are definitely praying the solution in a positive way. They are very encouraging and if you want to you can pray them for me. I am all for it.

Below I have a prayer that combines many of the passages in the list into a prayer that we can pray for those we desire to see grow in God. I believe we can pray this prayer over believers or unbelievers since we are praying the solution.

We are asking God to open a person's eyes to give him or her wisdom and understanding about God, about His love, about His call on their life, about His power that is working in them, to mention a few.

This is exactly what I needed. I can pray this prayer in front of anyone and for anyone without any inhibition. It is what God desires for the person. It is the word of God that does not return void.

## A Prayer You Can

Here it is. Check it out and see what you think:

Father, I thank you for \_\_\_\_\_. I pray that You would give her a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge You.<sup>1</sup> I ask that You would open the eyes of her heart and enlighten her to know the hope of Your calling and the riches of the glory of Your inheritance in the saints.<sup>2</sup>

God, I thank you for the freedom You are giving \_\_\_\_\_ as You are transforming her from glory to glory into Your image through the power of the Holy Spirit.<sup>3</sup> I thank You for transforming her by the renewing of her mind.<sup>4</sup>

In the name of Jesus, I cast down every lofty thing in \_\_\_\_\_ mind that would exalt itself against a true knowledge of You<sup>5</sup> and replace it with increasing knowledge of Yourself.<sup>6</sup> May every stronghold of the false speculations of man be destroyed<sup>7</sup> and be replaced by the truth of the gospel that manifests the power of Your salvation.<sup>8</sup>

I pray that \_\_\_\_\_ would take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ<sup>9</sup> and be anxious for nothing but instead pray with thanksgiving to You.<sup>10</sup> May her mind dwell and think upon whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, and is excellent and worthy of praise.<sup>11</sup>

I ask that \_\_\_\_\_ be strengthened with power through the Holy Spirit in her inner man so she might be rooted and grounded in love.<sup>12</sup> May she comprehend what is the breadth, and length, and height, and depth<sup>13</sup> and be filled up to the fullness of You.<sup>14</sup>

I pray that she would take up Your full armor (the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, the shield of faith, and the sword of the Spirit) to stand against the schemes of the devil.<sup>15</sup>

May she be strong in You and in the power of Your might.<sup>16</sup> May she know the surpassing greatness of Your power according to the working of the strength of Your might<sup>17</sup> and so be strengthened with all power according to Your glorious might.<sup>18</sup>

May she experience the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge.<sup>19</sup> and be filled with the knowledge of Your will all spiritual wisdom and knowledge.<sup>20</sup> May her love abound more and more in real knowledge and discernment, so she might approve those things that are excellent.<sup>21</sup>

May Christ dwell in her heart by faith<sup>22</sup> so she might experience Your peace that passes all understanding.<sup>23</sup> I pray that she might walk in a manner worthy of the Lord:<sup>24</sup> sincere and blameless<sup>25</sup> pleasing You in all respects,<sup>26</sup> bearing fruit for every good work,<sup>27</sup> attaining steadfastness and patience,<sup>28</sup> proving Your good, acceptable, and perfect will for her life.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Eph. 1:17, <sup>2</sup>Eph. 1:18, <sup>3</sup>2 Cor. 3:17-18, <sup>4</sup>Rom. 12:2, <sup>5</sup>2 Cor. 10:3, <sup>6</sup>Col. 1:10, <sup>7</sup>2 Cor. 10:3, <sup>8</sup>Rom. 1:16, <sup>9</sup>2 Cor. 10:3, <sup>10</sup>Phil. 4:6, <sup>11</sup>Phil. 4:8, <sup>12</sup>Eph. 3:17, <sup>13</sup>Eph. 3:18, <sup>14</sup>Eph. 3:19, <sup>15</sup>Eph. 6:11-17, <sup>16</sup>Eph. 6:10, <sup>17</sup>Eph. 1:19, <sup>18</sup>Col. 1:11, <sup>19</sup>Eph. 3:19, <sup>20</sup>Col. 1:9, <sup>21</sup>Phil. 1:9-10, <sup>22</sup>Eph. 3:17, <sup>23</sup>Phil. 4:7, <sup>24</sup>Col. 1:10, <sup>25</sup>Phil. 1:10, <sup>26</sup>Col. 1:10, <sup>27</sup>Col. 1:10, <sup>28</sup>Col. 1:11, <sup>29</sup>Rom. 12:2

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[Download a PDF version of this prayer](#)

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## How to Use This Prayer



### Be Led by the Spirit

I want to give you some ideas about how you can use this prayer. The first is that you be led by the Spirit in using it. Reading through this prayer will do little if it is not accompanied with faith and the power of the Holy Spirit.

Prayer is not a magical thing where if we repeat this prayer enough times it will come true. Prayer is uniting your heart with God and interceding for others to come to a knowledge of the truth.

We are asking God that the people we are praying for will experience the fullness that Christ has made available to them. We are seeking to break any fortresses or any other barriers that stand in the way of their growth in Christ.



## Pray it Verbatim

The Lord may lead you to pray this prayer verbatim. After all it is Scripture. We are being mentored by Paul on how to effectively pray for people. All the areas we are praying for will lead to positive growth and increase in people's lives.

We can even pray this prayer over cities, states, nations, and the world. All the things we are praying are what God desires for all people. We know that he desires everyone to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

This prayer will break barriers and release the blessing of the Lord upon people's lives. Your prayers will join with the prayers of others and contribute to many coming to the Lord.

## Expand on a Section of the Prayer

Take one concept or one paragraph from the prayer above and focus on it. We are asking for very specific things in a broad sense. You could always spend more time on a topic and pray more in depth for a person.

For example, you could take the second sentence of the prayer, "I pray that You would give her a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge You." Some additional things you could pray might be:

- Pray that they be drawn to the word of God and as they read He would give them revelation of who He is.
- Pray that the presence of the Lord would overshadow them and they would recognize that it is God and open up their heart to Him.
- Pray that anything they have learned of the Lord in the past would rise up in them and produce a longing for God.
- Pray that any misconceptions they may have of God would be exposed so the person might reject them as false.

## Pray and Believe Until You Get the Answer



Some people teach that if you pray a prayer more than once it is unbelief. I disagree.

Jesus taught us to persevere in prayer. We are to pray until we know that we have received the answer. Once we have received the confirmation from God in our hearts that it is finished, we can begin to thank Him for the answer.

Many times as we are praying God will say, "It is finished." We can then rejoice and wait confidently for what He has promised He will do. Sometimes it may take years for the promise to manifest.

God is faithful. He will do what He says. He may not do it as fast as we would like, but He will do it.

I'll give you the Reader's Digest version of the story about my son, Joshua. When he was a teenager he rebelled against the Lord. This caused great tension in our family.

Both Suzette and I were praying (in separate rooms) "complaining prayers" that focused on all the bad stuff he was doing. We brought up to God the stress that was being placed upon our family. I even considered quitting the ministry because if I could not manage my own household and keep my own son in submission, how could I care for God's church? (1 Timothy 3:4-5).

That day God showed up to both Suzette and me as we were “prayer complaining” and brought correction to us. He spoke to Suzette and said, “What do I have against your son?”

She felt the rebuke of the Lord and instantly knew that the complaining was over. We could no longer pray this way to the Lord for our son. He then gave both of us an assurance that He had heard our prayers (even though they were misdirected) and that it was finished. Josh would serve the Lord.

We instantly changed from prayer complaining to thanking Jesus for the answer to our prayers even though our son's actions did not change. It took ten years for him to return to the Lord. Today, Josh is the worship leader at our church.

It is not enough to begin to pray, nor to pray aright; nor is it enough to continue for a time to pray; but we must patiently, believingly, continue in prayer until we obtain an answer; and further we have not only to continue in prayer unto the end, but we have also to believe that God does hear us, and will answer our prayers. Most frequently we fail in not continuing in prayer until the blessing is obtained, and in not expecting the blessing.

-----George Muller-----

Next week we'll look at the power of praying in the Spirit.

P.S. Is there someone you are praying for to come to a knowledge of the Lord? List their name below and let us join you in believing for their salvation.

# Destroying Strongholds: Smashing Thoughts That Bind Pt 7

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One of the most powerful weapons in our arsenal of prayer is praying in the spirit. I liken it to hitting the center of the bullseye. When we pray in the spirit we always hit our target.

## The Power of Praying in Tongues

I am going to talk about a topic that gets people all stirred up: speaking in tongues. I am not sure why it causes such a stir since it is clearly taught in the scriptures and Paul tells the Corinthians “do not forbid to speak in tongues” (1 Corinthians 14:39).

Our interest today is not in the use of tongues and interpretation within a church service, but praying in the spirit (praying in tongues) during personal times of prayer and worship.

1 Corinthians 14 is Paul’s discussion on the use of tongues in a church service. But in instructing his readers about the use of tongues in public he shows us many insights to the workings of tongues in private prayer and worship.

Let’s look at what Paul has to say about this wonderful topic.

## We Speak Directly to God

For one who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God; for no one understands, but in his spirit he speaks mysteries. (1 Corinthians 14:2)

Paul lets us know that when we speak or pray in tongues we are speaking directly to God. It seems that tongues are not designed to be spoken and understood by men. They are directed toward God.

That is why in a church service there must be an interpreter present to interpret the tongue into the known language of the people. The only way for a person to understand the tongue is by another gift of the Spirit: the interpretation of tongues.

When we pray in tongues we do not know what we are actually praying, unless the Lord give us the interpretation. We are speaking in our spirit the mysteries to God. Our spirit is communicating with the Spirit of God.

## We Edify Ourselves

“One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself . . .” (1 Corinthians 14:4)

When we pray in the spirit we get edified. The idea is that we are built up spiritually as we pray in tongues. It strengthens us in the inner man.

There are times in my life when I am feel overwhelmed and do not know how to pray. During those time I will get before the Lord and begin to pray in tongues. As I pray the Lord begins to bring peace to my soul and direction to my mind.

I have actually had a person tell me that it is selfish for me to seek to edify myself by praying in tongues. I thought this was very strange because I seek to be edified all the time. I read the word of God to be built up. I go to church and get edified, Even Jude tells us to seek to build ourselves up.

But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit (Jude 20)

Praying in the Spirit is just one way that the Lord uses to build us in our faith.

## Our Spirit Prays

For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful.(1 Corinthians 14:14)



Paul again underlines the fact that it is our spirit that is praying. It does not require our intellect to speak in tongues. It is not our mind that is praying, but our spirits. We are communicating with God from the essence of our being. In a language that He has given for this specific purpose.

How many times have you been faced with a situation where you did not know how to pray? Praying in the spirit gets around the limitations of our mind and our understanding. It allows us to pray without hindrance. We can freely open our hearts and pray.

## We Can Sing in the Spirit



What is the outcome then? I will pray with the spirit and I will pray with the mind also; I will sing with the spirit and I will sing with the mind also. (1 Corinthians 14:15)

This insight by Paul lets us know that tongues are not just limited to speaking or prayer. They can be used to worship God in song.

Paul sang with the spirit and with his mind. He used this wonderful gift of God to worship and give thanks to God.

## Paul Spoke in Tongues a Lot

I thank God, I speak in tongues more than you all. (1 Corinthians 14:18)

Did you hear what Paul just said? He said he spoke in tongues more than the Corinthians.

He was writing this letter because this church was speaking in tongues a lot. They were blurting out in tongues during the church service without an interpretation. It seems like they were out of order in using tongues and so Paul was writing this chapter to bring correction, direction, and order to their use of tongues.

Yet in the middle of this correction he tells them that he speaks in tongues more than all of them. He must have thought that this was an important and valuable part of his walk with God to be speaking, praying and singing in tongues so much.

The apostle Paul was not afraid of tongues in either personal life or corporate gatherings. He just wanted those using the gift in the church to make sure there was an interpretation so all present could be edified.

## Forbidden to Forbid

“Therefore, my brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak in tongues.” (1 Corinthians 14:39)

Some in the church at Corinth must have wanted to forbid speaking in tongues. Paul knew that speaking in tongues was from God and would not allow the church to shut tongues down. He forbid them to forbid speaking in tongues.

# But I Don't Speak with Tongues



Maybe you are reading this and thinking, “What about me, I don’t speak with tongues?” Doesn’t the Bible say that not everyone speaks in tongues?”

27 Now you are Christ’s body, and individually members of it. 28 And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues. 29 All are not apostles, are they? All are not prophets, are they? All are not teachers, are they? All are not workers of miracles, are they? 30 All do not have gifts of healings, do they? All do not speak with tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do they? 31 But earnestly desire the greater gifts. (1 Corinthians 12:27-31)

I’ll give you the short answer. The Bible does say that not everyone is a worker of miracles, operate in gifts of healings, speak in tongues, or interpret tongues. The kind of tongues that not everyone has is the gift of tongues that is used in the church along with the interpretation of tongues.

I believe that praying in the spirit is available to every believer though the baptism with the Holy Spirit. Let me show you why I think this to be true.

# What is the Baptism with the Holy Spirit?

I wrote a book on the topic called "Spirit Baptism." Below is a large portion of chapter two of the book explaining what the baptism with the Holy Spirit is.

Now that we have put to rest many of the misconceptions that surround the Baptism with the Holy Spirit, we can consider what it is. The Bible uses many and various terms to communicate what the Baptism is all about. Most of these terms are descriptive in nature. They describe what is happening to a person, but tell very little about what is going on inside a person or the theological nature of the experience. We will allow the Bible to describe what the Baptism is and its purpose.

## A Promise from God



And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high. (Luke 24:49)

Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, "Which," He said, "you heard of from Me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." (Acts 1:4-5)

Both of the above verses state that the disciples were to stay in Jerusalem until they received the promise of the Father. The verse in Luke does not describe what the promise of the Father is, but informs us that it has something to do with being "clothed

with power from on high." The passage in Acts, without a doubt, reveals that the promise of the Father is the Baptism with the Holy Spirit. Remember now this is what Jesus is calling the experience.

The Father is the One who gave the promise that the Spirit would be poured out on all flesh. Jesus is the One who would administer the Spirit Baptism. All four Gospels and the Book of Acts describe John the Baptist as "he who baptized with water" and Jesus as the One who would "baptize with the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33; Acts 1:5, 11:16).

JESUS TRULY IS THE BAPTIZER WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT! He is the One who poured out the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, at Samaria, on the household of Cornelius, and in Ephesus. He is the same One who will pour out the Holy Spirit upon you today! Jesus proclaimed, "I am sending forth the promise of the Father upon you" (Luke 24:49). Peter in his sermon on the day of Pentecost, sees the outpouring of the Spirit upon them as the fulfillment of this promise.

"Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you see and hear," (Acts 2:33).

Each person who is Baptized with the Spirit is a recipient of the promise of the Father. Since the Baptism is seen as a promise from God the Father, it should be sought after and cherished like any other promise that God has freely given. The promises of God are true and will surely come to pass in our lives as we seek the Lord. The key word in the last sentence is *seek*.

Many wonderful promises of God are available to us, but often are not sought after and therefore do not become evident in our lives. Ask God to give you His promise of the Baptism with the Holy Spirit; and continue to ask, seek, and knock until you receive the promise. Remember what Luke quotes Jesus as saying in Luke 11:13, "How much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?" Go ahead, ask!



## A Gift from God



Peter said to them, "Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:38)

The Baptism with the Holy Spirit is also described as a gift. In Acts 2:38 Peter exhorts his hearers to do three things:

1. repent
2. be baptized with water
3. receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

We have already discussed that Peter was not talking about receiving the Spirit into our hearts and lives at salvation, but the gift of the Baptism with the Holy Spirit. Peter deals also with this issue later on in the book of Acts.

In Acts chapter ten we see the story of the Holy Spirit being poured out upon the Gentiles. This was an incredible revelation to Peter and the Jews that traveled with him. They didn't understand that the Gentiles could be saved, baptized in water, and filled with the Holy Spirit without becoming Jews first. What a great surprise it was for them to find out that the Gentiles could receive the same gift that they had received from the Lord, tongues and all. Read for yourself how the Gentiles received the Spirit and how Peter knew that they had:

While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message. All the circumcised believers who came with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. For they were hearing them speaking with tongues and exalting God. Then Peter answered, "Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be

baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we did, can he?" (Acts 10:44-47)

Peter and the Jews with him understood that the Gentiles received the gift of the Spirit the same way they received Him on the day of Pentecost. They knew this because they heard them speaking in tongues and glorifying God.

The fact that the Gentiles received the same gift of the Spirit as the 120 was a major part of Peter's defense before the Jerusalem Council. The council was called together to determine whether it was proper for Peter to have eaten with the Gentiles. Peter began to explain the reason for his trip to Cornelius' house and said that as he began to speak:

The Holy Spirit fell on them, just as He did upon us at the beginning. And I remembered the word of the Lord, how He used to say, "John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." Therefore if God gave to them the same gift as He gave to us also after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way? When they heard this, they quieted down and glorified God, saying "Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life." (Acts 11:15-18).

The fact that the Gentiles received the Spirit in the same manner as the disciples in the upper room was a confirmation to all present that God accepted the Gentiles into the Family of God.

The word translated as gift in the above passages is *dorea*. The main focus of this word is upon the free giving of the gift with no strings attached. The gift is given totally by the grace of God and has nothing to do with the qualifications or worthiness of the recipient. The Spirit is given as a gift, like salvation, and cannot be earned in any way. Are you waiting for a special time in your walk to ask the Lord for the Baptism? Are you trying to be good enough to receive Him? Forget it, the Baptism is a gift. Open up your arms and receive Him. Receive the gift of the Holy Spirit just like the 120 did.

## Being Totally Immersed by the Spirit



The word "immerse," according to Webster, means to "plunge into or as if into a liquid," "to baptize by dipping into water." This is the same word picture that John the Baptist and Jesus were describing when they used the term Baptism with the Spirit. The word "baptism" comes from the Greek word *baptizo*. From very early times it carried the idea of immersion. One word picture describing *baptizo* as a sunken ship that is totally submerged beneath the water. *Baptizo* is a stronger, intensified form of the word *bapto* which means "to dip," as in the dyeing of material, that is by totally immersing it in the dye. Therefore, the idea of the Baptism with the Spirit is that the believer is totally immersed with the Spirit of God.

Understanding the concept of the word Baptism may give a little insight into some of the other terms used to describe the Baptism.

## Being Poured Out or Poured Forth

It will come about after this that I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind; and your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on the male and female servants I will pour out My Spirit in those days. (Joel 2:28-29, also quoted by Peter in Acts 2:17-18)

Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear. (Acts 2:33)

All the circumcised believers who came with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. (Acts 10:45)

For I will pour out water on the thirsty land and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out My Spirit on your offspring and My blessing on your descendants. (Isaiah 44:3)

## Being Filled with or Full of the Holy Spirit

And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit was giving them utterance. (Acts 2:4)

Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, “Rulers and elders of the people,” (Acts 4:8)

And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness. (Acts 4:31)

The statement found approval with the whole congregation; and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit . . . (Acts 6:5)

But being full of the Holy Spirit, he [Stephen] gazed intently into the heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. (Acts 7:55)

So Ananias departed and entered the house, and after laying his hands on him said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit. (Acts 9:17)

for he [Barnabas] was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And considerable numbers were brought to the Lord. (Acts 11:24)

But Saul, who was also known as Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, fixed his gaze on him, (Acts 13:9)

And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Holy Spirit, (Eph. 5:18)

## The Spirit Fell or Had Fallen Upon Them

For He [the Holy Spirit] had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. (Acts 8:16)

While Peter was speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message. (Acts 10:44)

And as I [Peter] began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as He did upon us at the beginning. (Acts 11:15)

## Receive the Holy Spirit

Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:38)

[Peter and John] who came down and prayed for them that they [the Samaritans] might receive the Holy Spirit. (Acts 8:15)

Then they [Peter and John] began laying their hands on them, and they were receiving the Holy Spirit. (Acts 8:17)

Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we did, can he? (Acts 10:47)

## The Spirit Has Come Upon

but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth. (Acts 1:8)

## Clothed with Power

And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high. (Luke 24:49)

All of the terms above are used to describe the Baptism with the Holy Spirit. Though the words are different, the experience described is the same.

## An Enduing with Power



The whole purpose behind the Baptism with the Holy Spirit is to give believers power for service. The same Holy Spirit that worked the miraculous in the life of Jesus and His disciples is the same Holy Spirit who wants to work through us to touch our world today. We are to be Christ's representatives in this world, establishing His will and purpose. This can only be accomplished as we are endued with power from on high.

Jesus commanded His disciples to remain together in Jerusalem until they "received power" or were "clothed with power from on high" (Act 1:8; Luke 24:49). He asked this of men and women who had followed Him for years in His ministry, hearing Him preach, seeing Him heal, watching Him cast out demons. Seventy of them had already been given permission to heal the sick and cast out demons, yet Jesus asked them to remain in Jerusalem until they received power. If these who experienced the power of Jesus first hand needed to receive power for ministry, how much more do we need to ask God for this power?

## Receiving the Baptism with the Holy Spirit

So the question is, "How do I receive the Baptism with the Holy Spirit.?" Chapter six from the book answers that question.



Now we come down to the nitty gritty! At this point of the book you have already decided whether or not you are interested in receiving the Baptism. If you are interested there are a couple of things that must be in place before you can be Baptized. The first deals with the Baptism from God's perspective. The second is from your perspective.

## Prerequisites

The first prerequisite is to be a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. By that I mean you have repented of your sins and trusted in Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior. Jesus will not pour out His Spirit upon an unbeliever. First there is repentance, then the Baptism.

Repentance means turning 180 degrees. We come to an agreement with God concerning our own sinfulness and turn from our sin (180 degrees) to the Lord. In turning away from our sin and trusting in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ we are saved. Without salvation it is impossible to receive the Baptism. Acts 2:38 states, "Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." The gift of the Holy Spirit is received after repentance has taken place.

It should not be understood from Acts 2:38 that a person must be baptized in water before he can receive the Baptism. This may seem to be the case, but it is not an absolute requirement. The Baptism can take place at any time after repentance has taken place.

The Gentiles in the house of Cornelius received the Baptism immediately upon believing on the Lord and were baptized in water after this took place. "While Peter was still speaking these words the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message" (Acts 10:44). Even as Peter was preaching the salvation message about what Christ had done, those listening believed in the Lord and received the Baptism

for they were hearing them speaking with tongues and exalting God. Then Peter answered, "Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we did, can he?" (Acts 10:46-47)

The second prerequisite is a willingness to receive the Baptism. If you do not want the Baptism, *God will not force it upon you*. He will not ridicule you or look down upon you for not seeking the Baptism. God is not in the business of forcing His blessing upon His children. He gave us a free will so we could exercise choice. God didn't force you to accept Christ as Savior. He left the choice up to you. The same is true concerning the Baptism. If you don't want it, you won't get it. But if you don't want it, you will be robbing yourself of one of the great blessings of God.

Now that we have seen what must take place in the life of the believer before receiving the Baptism, let's look into how it is received and how it is activated in your life.

## It is Received by Faith



The Baptism is received in the same way as any other gift from the Lord is received, by faith. You simply take God at His word and ask Him to give you the Baptism. He greatly desires to pour out His Spirit upon you and will not give you a snake or a rock if you ask Him for the Baptism (Luke 11:10-13). When you were saved you accepted the gift of salvation by faith. The Baptism is no different. It must be asked for and received by faith.

Picture in your mind God standing before you with a gift in His hand. Upon this gift is a tag with your name on it, so you know that it is yours. God reaches forth His hand to give you this gift. What are you going to do? You can let Him hold it out to you or you can receive the gift from Him. Your faith is the hand that reaches out and receives the gift from the hand of God. Go ahead, reach out to God and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Ask God in faith for the Baptism and receive it in faith.

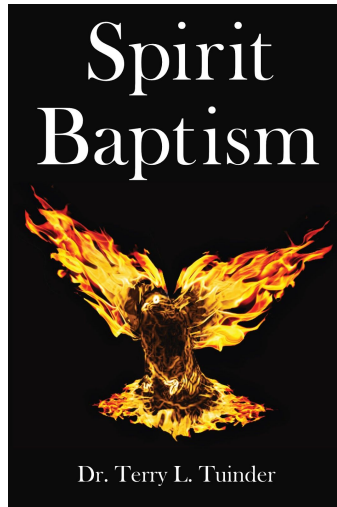
## It is Activated by Faith

Once you have received the gift, you must open it if you are ever going to use what is inside the box. You have the gift in your possession but it is utterly useless unless you open the box, take out the gift, and use it. Just as faith reached out and accepted the gift, your faith must be activated in order to use the benefits of the Baptism. Many of the gifts of the Spirit are verbal in nature and require the use of your voice to become effective. Other gifts will require certain responses or actions from you if they are going to accomplish the Lord's will.

Remember, the Baptism is for the enduing of power for service. The entire focus of the Baptism is to enable you to serve others and defeat the work of the devil. Certainly you

will be blessed and encouraged as a byproduct of this work, but the main focus is outward, not inward.

The fruit of the Spirit deals with your inner man. The Baptism deals with the flow of ministry outward. This work of the Spirit has been described as rivers of living water flowing from our innermost being (John 7:38). Allow the power of the Holy Spirit to manifest Himself through your life. Remember the Baptism is just a doorway to a new dimension of the power of the Holy Spirit in your life.



Want to learn more about the Baptism with the Holy Spirit, then consider picking up a copy of Spirit Baptism today. In it you will learn:

- Nine common misconceptions that may be hindering you from receiving the baptism with the Holy Spirit.
- Why the baptism is available today despite what some people teach about it.
- How the baptism with the Spirit fits into the larger plan of God.
- Four reasons why you should want the baptism with the Holy Spirit.
- How you can know you are baptized with the Spirit,
- Whether you have to speak in tongues or not when you receive the Spirit
- About the three types of tongues seen in scripture.
- How long the baptism with the Spirit lasts.

Just [click here to order the paperback book](#) to order from Amazon (affiliate link)

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Next week we'll look at Ephesians 4:22-24 to help us understand the part we play in changing our behaviors to line up with the truth of who we are in Christ. The choices we make will either help or hinder our walk with Christ.

# Destroying Strongholds: Smashing Thoughts That Bind Pt 8

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Once we recognize an ungodly belief and reject it, we must deal with the habits that we picked up with the beliefs.

## Getting Out of the Rut

Let me be clear, sometimes when God reveals the truth everything changes, habits and all. But sometimes we are so programmed in responding a certain way that it takes a conscious effort for us to put off the old and put on the new. The Apostle Paul says:

22 that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, 23 and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, 24 and put on the new self, which in *the likeness of* God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth. (Ephesians 4:22-24)

When we were held by an ungodly belief we learned to operate out of the lies. We patterned our life and responses from those lies. Our responses become instant and automatic. We have responded in a way so many times it takes no conscious thought. We do it automatically.

How many times have you experienced this truth in your own life. A situation takes place and you respond negatively. Instantly there is deep regret because you do not want to act that way. It just happens without any thought.

This is a learned response that has become ingrained in you actions. You have responded from the lie so many times it has become second nature. You just respond.

That was true for me when I first came to the Lord. My problem was with anger. I would instantly respond to certain situations with anger and arguing. I hated it and wanted it to stop.

No matter how many times I told myself, "I will not get angry or argue," I responded with anger and argued to win. Finally in desperation, I cried out to the Lord.

I told the Lord that anger just flew out of me before I really had a chance to stop it. I felt helpless. I asked the Lord if He would help me and give me an opportunity to respond before I blew up and acted in a way I hated.

To make sure I had a chance to respond I asked the Lord to set off a flashing red light in my mind as a reminder that I had a choice to make.

One day shortly after that, the Operations Officer in my squadron came to me and began to chew me out for something one of my troops did wrong. I sucked in a deep breath and raised my hand ready to argue with him.



I saw the red flashing light in my mind.



I put my hand down, lowered my head, and said, "I'm sorry, sir."

He said, "That's okay," and left.

I was shocked. It worked. I could stop the anger that always rose up in my heart. I could react differently than I always did before. Wahoo!

I always love it when the Lord begins to show me how I can live differently in Him. I don't have to stay the same, think the same, or react the same. I can make a choice to agree with what God says is true.

Paul shows us a three-step process we can go through to see these changes come to play in our lives. He said:

- Lay aside your old self (corrupted in accordance with the lust of deceit)
- Be renewed in the spirit of your mind
- Put on the new self (in the likeness of God)





# Putting Off the Old Self

The first stage of the process is laying aside the old self. This means laying aside all of our old beliefs and actions that do not line up with God's truth. Before we came to Christ we did not have the power to do this. But now we do.

The power of the Holy Spirit in us gives us the ability to put off the old man. Taking off the old man deals with the casting off ungodly beliefs and ungodly actions.

Paul talks about it as a former way of life. Now that you have come to Christ you can put off the way you used to live and put on what God has for you.

The former ways are corrupt. They are worn out, useless, and deceitful. They did not produce life, only death and destruction.

The way to put this off is by accepting and walking in the truth. Paul tells us to be renewed in our minds. We have seen throughout this series of posts that ungodly beliefs hold us in captivity and keep us from experiencing the life of God.

It is the renewing of our minds that allows us to make choices leading to life. Our thoughts and minds must come into agreement with the truth of God's word. We must allow Him to shape our understanding of life and godliness.

The only way to be free from an ungodly belief is to recognize it as a lie and embrace the truth of God's word. When we allow God's word to shape our thoughts, we can renounce the lie and have our thinking change. Changed thinking results in the possibility of a changed life.

Understanding the truth in our mind is not enough. We must put the truth into practice. It is never enough to reject the lie and accept the truth. We must repent and renounce the lies.

True repentance is agreeing with God's truth and thereby begin to walk in it. True repentance leads to a true change in a person's thoughts and actions. We are never to just get rid of the old. We must also put on the new.

Getting rid of something is only a partial victory. God calls us to get rid of the old but has something incredible to replace it.



## Putting on the New Self

These new clothes are not something we provide for ourselves. They are already provided and they are in the likeness of God and created in righteousness and truth.

The Apostle Peter puts it this way:

His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us to His own glory and excellence, by which He promised to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. (2 Peter 1:3-5)

God gives us the power and ability to escape the corruption that comes through sinful desires and put on the new man, which is actually partaking in His divine nature. When we reject the old way of life, accept the truth of God's word, we are able to put on the new man and walk in newness of life by the power of the Holy Spirit.

It is God's divine power that has made all of these things available. It is much like the weapons of our warfare that are divinely powerful. God has provided what we need to live a fruitful, overcoming life.

The Christian life is not a life of self effort. Too many are trying to live the Christian life in the power of the flesh through rules and regulations rather than by the power of the Holy Spirit. This will always lead to defeat and hopelessness.

God does not want us to struggle in our own strength and abilities. God has provided whatever we need to live a godly life. It is already a finished work and available to us through faith.

Paul tells us to make the choice to reject and put off the things in the past that are corrupt and bring death into our lives. He invites us to have our minds renewed so that we can come into agreement with the truth of God's word. Once we know the truth we must grab hold of the new self made available through the power of God.

God has given us everything we need for life and godliness. It is when we embrace His truth with faith and walk not in our own strength but His that we live life as God intends it to be.

An important thing to remember is that all that we need is already available and waiting for us to put on. It is not something that God needs to do. He has already done it. It is waiting for us.

## Take Responsibility

Often we are asking God to do things that we are supposed to do. We pray, "God take this from me, while God is asking us to take it off. Or we ask God to give us something that He has already given, while He is waiting for us to put it on.

God will not do what He requires us to do in response to Him. It is our responsibility to put off and put on, not God's. It is our responsibility to walk by faith. No one else can do it for us.

I want to leave you with a challenge. Ask God to begin to reveal ungodly beliefs in your life. Ask Him to show you every time you think an ungodly thought. When He shows you one write it down on a piece of paper or in your phone. When you have time repent for the ungodly belief and ask God what His truth is. Put a line through the ungodly belief and write down the truth. Begin to meditate on the truth and live it out.

## TIP

When you are reading the Bible pay close attention to the tense of the verbs in the sentence.

Does the Bible say something was done in the past? If so, it is done. "His divine power has granted to us . . . " We don't have to ask God to provide this. It is already available.

Does the Bible tell us to do something in the present? “Lay aside the old self . . . Put on the new self” This is something that we must do. God has made the provision, but we must respond in obedience.

Does the Bible speak of something in the future? This is something that we can put our hope in because God is faithful.

Next week we will start looking at the next invisible barrier of unforgiveness.