

# Making a Stronghold Weak

by Shane Idleman

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**Scripture:** 2 Corinthians 10:3, Philippians 4:8, James 4:7, Job 1:10

**Topics:** "Overcoming Strongholds", "The Power of Prayer and Worship"

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## Description

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## Transcript

The title is Making a Stronghold Weak. Making a stronghold weak. Do you know what a stronghold is? Oh, you know what it is because you've been trying to get rid of it.

How do you make a stronghold weak? In this area of theology now that I'm in, we're going through the character of God, the nature of God. I've got systematic theology books. I'm looking at the chapter headings.

The next one that's coming up is demonology. You know what that is? Just the name doesn't sound good, does it? Demonology. It's not the name of a rock group.

It is the study of demons. The study of angels. The study of miracles.

That whole spiritual realm. The demonic realm. I've told you before, John MacArthur or Wayne Grudem or Norman Geisler, if you want a view in the middle and different things, because they all look at things differently, from election to predestination to the church, Israel replacing the church, to baptism, to different things.

So I look at different areas here, and it gave me a headache because there is a lot of information on this area of demonology, primarily looking to the Bible alone. And this message started to turn from, even as

early as 5 this morning, turning from what it was to now taking out a page or two and adding different things in there, coming out of this area on strongholds. Because to be forewarned, you've heard me say this before, is to be forearmed.

If you know somebody is coming to hit you, what are you going to do? You're ready, right? Or if a car is going to hit you, okay, I'm not going that direction. So same thing with the demonic realm. Demonology.

And this might take a message or two or three, I'm not sure. Again, whatever is burning in my heart, whatever God kind of puts together, as I'm reading the Word, I just kind of bring it to you. That's why I probably wouldn't be graded very well on sermon preparation, or actually they call it homiletics.

On sermons and how they're prepared, and you need your thesis, your introduction, your three points, you need a closing argument, you need to have that doctrinal application. Make sure they need to stick with the title. You don't want to go over three points.

You have to make sure your opening paragraph or opening sentence is strong, about 14, 15 words. Make sure it brings the reader in. I'm like, wow, that's how you do a sermon? I mean, that's good stuff, but sometimes I'm just all over the place.

So I'm trying to get back to that, but I'm also being freed by what God wants to speak to, because every service is different. What I say to you is often a lot different than what I say to the second service. The notes are the same, but they go on many different rabbit trails.

That's why some people like to stay at both services, because they think they get two different messages. So, making a stronghold weak. Theology on fire, part four.

An aspect of theology, as I just said, is demonology. In theology, there's I think over 100, I should have looked, 118 mentions or so in the New Testament primarily. The Old Testament doesn't have as many mentions of demons, if you can believe that.

The New Testament has, I think, 75% of the mentions. And I find that ironic that now people think that doesn't matter to us today. Somehow Jesus cast them out.

Somehow Jesus dealt with the demons. Somehow Paul dealt with the demons. And now today, thank God, we don't have to do that anymore.

Hmm. I don't know about that. But, there are different views on what I'm going to open with.

Have you heard of Pastor Robert Morris? Gateway Church. Maybe you've heard of Gateway Worship. Carrie Jobe? Anybody? Ring, ring bell.

I think she started there. Anybody heard of Derek Prince, who passed away many, many years ago? Anybody heard of John MacArthur? Guess what? A lot of different views. A lot of different views.

Derek Prince would teach that a believer can actually have a demon. And not possessed. I'm careful here.

Not possessed, but have a demon where they need deliverance to be freed. Robert Morris would be along the same lines. John MacArthur? Not even close.

Let me read what he wrote. Can they, meaning demons, walk through an open door and become a squatter? Proponents of today's spiritual warfare movement say yes. But they base their answer on subjective experience.

Not on God's Word. The Bible makes it clear that such a claim has no justifiable basis. There's no clear example in the Bible where a demon ever inhabited or invaded a true believer.

Never in the New Testament epistles are believers warned about the possibility of being inhabited by demons. Neither do we see anyone rebuking, binding, or casting out demons of a true believer. Confused? I was a little bit until, you know, you just look to God's Word.

But there will be gray area. Now the reason I think personally because there's a gray area and a division between the men I just mentioned is there's always a divide, often between conservatives and charismatics. Right? Conservatives.

The Word of God alone. I like that. You're conservative.

Word of God alone. Don't get too emotional. Don't sing half the songs we just sang.

Don't you dare raise your hands. You know, it's conservative. We're conservative.

We're not going to get emotional. We're not going to get crazy about demons. They don't really manifest themselves.

And it's just this conservative type atmosphere. It is void of emotion. Often it's void of many things.

But there are many positive things. Are you conservative or are you liberal? It's good to be conservative when it comes to biblical doctrine. The fundamentals of the faith.

And then charismatics, right, seem to be open to things. But you have to be careful because when you're open you can be open to too much. Right? I mean, I have people blaming demons on everything.

Are you going to be kidding me? There's a demon of coffee? There's a demon of bad moods? There's a demon on cavities? I mean, guys, come on. But they're more expressive in their worship. They're more, yeah, demonology.

Casting out demons. So that's why you always have a battle between often opposing views because one are very conservative in their theology. Some are very open.

More expressive. More the Holy Spirit. You know the language, right? I could read something.

I could read something. And again, I'm not endorsing anybody really. I'm just telling you what people believe.

I can read something very profound and deep on the Holy Spirit. And say, by John MacArthur, people say, oh my Lord, that is wonderful. I read the same exact statement and say that was by Jack Hayford.

Uh-uh, mm-mm. No, I don't know if I quite agree with that. You see how that works? The prejudice we have? Often, and I'll get into it if we get into the Holy Spirit, I've talked about it before, but our experience and how we view the Holy Spirit, I should say, how we view the work of the Holy Spirit, how we view this area is what we've experienced.

Right? You're going to have a hard time telling somebody that the gifts of the Holy Spirit don't exist today if they've experienced them. It's going to be impossible. You might as well tell them the sun doesn't come up.

Oh, that's from the devil. Well, Paul talked about it. Well, you can't speak in tongues.

Well, Paul did. See, it's of the devil. No.

Because they've never experienced it. Now, we never judge our experience. We never judge the Scripture in light of our experience.

Right? Well, I have experienced this. Because all the new... I could have a new age person probably come in and sing that song, Holy Spirit, You're Welcome Here. And their definition of love is different than mine.

Right? New age philosophy. Love. God is love.

He's everywhere. I've experienced that. Now, does your experience line up with Scripture? So when your experience lines up with Scripture, it's very safe ground.

Very safe ground. And I think it was D. Martin Lloyd-Jones who said, never interpret the Bible based on your experience. Always interpret your experience based on the Bible.

And he was actually a proponent. D. Martin Lloyd-Jones. Last chapter, I believe, of his books, he's got Teaching on the Baptism of the Holy Spirit.

A term I don't really use that much. He was taught on the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit being still active today.

As a result, his conservative publisher removed him from publication. And this is a book that, Preachers and Preaching is one of the top books that conservative pastors recommend. But when they get on this topic... Now, actually, D. Martin Lloyd-Jones caught heat.

John Piper wrote a wonderful article about it. Because even though he promoted the gifts, they were never there. Isn't that interesting? He believed in them, but he never saw them.

And it is a topic I'm hoping to get into in the future. But that was a very long rabbit trail to just explain why these guys are divided. Because when you understand why they're divided, you can better understand.

I can understand what John MacArthur is saying. I truly believe you don't need to cast a demon out of a believer. I truly believe that there's not this demon in a believer that's making... I just can't stop.

I'm a believer. I love the Lord. This demon is controlling me.

I'm a robot. I see what he's saying. But on the other hand, on the other hand, there is a demonic realm that works against us.

Well, how does it work? I'm glad you asked. That's what we're talking about. Here, in my opinion, here is what I think.

People cannot be possessed, but they can be oppressed. Oppressed means subject to hard treatment. In other words, the demonic realm.

You can't come in here. I'm living for the Lord. I'm doing what you can.

But can God through His sovereignty or permission or other areas or maybe God's wanting to discipline, can the demonic realm come in and harass my health? Heart palpitations. Illness. That is a very good possibility.

What happened to Job? So, the good thing for the believer is to know he can't come in and make me do what I don't want to do. And we've got on this side the Charismatic has scared a lot of people. Shane, I don't know if I have a demon.

What's going on? I'm so worried. If you're a believer, don't worry. Greater is He that's in you than He that's in the world.

So any believer can stand against that demonic oppression. That's why Paul talks about a stronghold. Don't give the enemy a place.

Don't give the enemy a foothold. Don't open the door for the enemy. Because when you open the door, He comes in.

So it really isn't about possession, it's how often you want to keep the door shut. And oppressing you. And I like Derek Prince's teachings.

But some of the things I'm like, that is... He's got a lot of proof of things happening in his meetings. So do other people. Other people I've talked to.

Robert Morris. In one of his sermons, he talks about somebody coming to him and saying, man, you've got a lot of demons in you that still need to be removed. I'm like, I'm trying to... You know, these guys are sincere and they were set free.

What's going on here? Is it the demons that have to be removed or the stronghold that has to be removed? And the demons are working through that. So lots to think about as we're getting into this. A demon can't make a believer do anything unless you can show me one scripture.

Because all the scriptures I see say, resist, flee, make no provision for, fight the good fight, put on the armor, don't let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus. And you have this aspect of fighting and warfare. Not being captive and led to do things we don't want to do.

But what about Paul? Oh, wretched man that I am. Who will deliver me from this body of sin and death? Right? We talked about that last week. Who's going to deliver me for the things I want to do I don't want to do.

And the things I want to do I don't. Or vice versa. I don't know what he said there.

So is that a demon making him do that? That to me sounds like the normal Christian struggle. Right? You ever go through that? I want to. Okay, what I talked about earlier.

Lord, I want to take better care of my body. Why do I keep falling in this area? I want to have clean, pure thoughts. See, I can get real with the 9am, right? Okay, 11am I'm going to have to walk on eggshells a little bit.

But why do I have these? Oh, wretched man that I am. So it's not about demonic necessarily, a demon taking over, but about the stronghold that we've allowed or that maybe a point of entry maybe that God has allowed. We're going to talk about that in a minute.

If a person begins to entertain thoughts of fear, jealousy, anger, or bitterness and they stop reading God's word if they open a door again to any type of addictive substance they will get bound again. So there's a stronghold there. So how do you make a stronghold weak? Here's how.

I'm going to show you. I'm going to work through this. Hopefully I have to take out a couple pages because I don't want to keep you here 2 hours and 10 minutes.

We can only do that Wednesday nights. This use this use let me see there, that sentence structure didn't work. I knew this morning's time would be a little rushed.

Okay, let's do this. Is there a stronghold always on me? Or how can I get free? Is it always going to be there or how can I get free? Often in our younger years is where we open the door, correct? If there's something you've been battling it's usually been opened earlier on in your life. There's a stronghold that the enemy goes after.

And what's a struggle for you isn't a struggle for me. Right? And vice versa. Vice versa.

I mean you can put a lot of things on my kitchen countertop and I'm not going to touch them. From marijuana to Vicodin to whatever. It's just, you know, it's just trash.

But you put an ice cold 6 pack of beer in the refrigerator for a month or two or three and I have to see that every day and go back to the enemies using the same thing he did years ago. You see how it works? Now I was around at an event last night everywhere. But it was, you know, go home and no big deal.

So it's not, you know, it's a constant thing. But if I put it in front of me and use that same thing the enemy used and want to play with the devil. And you know what that is.

That's why it's good to have filters on a computer. Or monitor a computer. Or relationships.

See we all have areas, right, that we know if I go back to that area if I go back to that the devil's going to have a heyday. He's going to, oh Shane's going back to the bait. Or you're going back to the bait.

So that's how strongholds work. Often the enemy watches how we were in our younger years and he'll go back to those things. Fear.

Anybody have that stronghold? Fear just comes on me. Anxiety. Jealousy.

Bitterness. Where's this coming? Shane, I've tried. I've done all that I can do.

What is this? Stronghold. But I do get emails sometimes when I teach on this and people take the other view. That a Christian can have a demon.

And they'll say, but Shane as a Christian I was delivered on a certain day from this whatever it is. Usually it's pornography. Some type of an addiction.

Alcohol, pain meds, nicotine. All kinds of things. People are just, I've been for 20 years and I've finally set free.

But my question is, was it because of possession or due to the fact that the person repented and cried out to God? But then the person would say, but I have done that many times before. Correct. But sometimes it's a fight.

Remember strongholds often don't just come crumbling down. I wish that a person would repent and believe and all their troubles are over. But often it's a fight.

It's a struggle until the day we are buried and you have a funeral service. Or a memorial service. Memorial service is without the casket.

Just in case you want to know that. So, there's this fight that happens. Personally, I can't say that a person has a demon and that's why they are ensnared.

Often the person blames the demon for their sin, but the Bible does not teach that. Have you ever seen that? And I talk to people, man Shane, the devil is really on me this week. He's on my marriage.

He's having a heyday in my life. No, you're just being really mean to your spouse. And your kids.

Did you really say that to her? Yeah, the devil made me do it. No, he didn't. No, he didn't.

The devil doesn't make you do anything as a believer. Never. Show me one Scripture where you are a robot to the demonic influence.

Now, I'm not minimizing the struggle, right? Amen? There's a stronghold. There's a struggle. The demonic realm, I don't know if there's an open door that the person gives him.

I don't know if it's a besetting sin. Because the more you give into a sin, the stronger that sin becomes. And the harder it is to get out of that sin.

So, could it be that God in His mercy lifts the oppression instead of a demon leaving? Could it be that God, okay, lifts the time of oppression instead of a demon really leaving. The demonic influence the oppression leaves versus a demon having residence in the body of the believer. Could it be that the person finally fully surrenders their life instead of secretly wanting to continue in the sin? As you can see, there's a lot of unanswered questions, right? Now, this might not be true for you guys, but for most people struggling, not all, but most, they actually kind of, the flesh kind of likes the sin.

You realize that, right? Oh, why do I keep? Because the flesh likes it. Why do I keep? The flesh is satisfied. That's why.

If it had no effect, the flesh didn't like it, we would never touch it. I've never seen anybody OD on broccoli. Right? Shane, I had too many heads of lettuce today.

What's going on with me? Right? No enticement. No hook. Nothing.

No allurements. Nothing. So we have to remember that sometimes it is because we still have a silent love for that sin.

John Owen, a Puritan author, wrote a great book on holiness. I don't know the title off hand. But he talks about either John Owen or J.C. Ryle.

J.C. Ryle wrote another good book on holiness as well. But they talk about he said you have to crucify your sin. You can't cuddle it and hold on to it.

You have to crucify and get rid of it. So that's maybe what might be happening in these people's lives who experience deliverance. Now, again, I'm learning like you are.

I might get to heaven and say, you know what, Shane, you kind of missed it on this one. A demon can do that. But then you have God's Word that says he can't.

So I lean towards that type. Because Paul, we'll talk about in a minute, Paul experienced some things. Believers experienced things.

But I don't want a person to be left with the impression they have a demon they are hopeless. And unless that demon is cast out, they're going to be bound to their addiction until the day they die. Unless I can get this demon, and people believe that.

I don't believe that. I don't believe that a person is left destitute until that demonic whatever it is, is completely removed. Because the Bible talks about putting on the armor of God, fighting the good fight.

We're going to talk about that right now. Sometimes there is a release, but often there is a fight. I mean, think about it.

If we were just released, there would never be a fight, would there? If there's not a fight, why does Paul say the weapons of your warfare? You can't get any stronger in the language than that. The weapons of your warfare. Putting on the whole armor of God.

You show me what's stronger than this. He's giving this image of a believer with a sword that wasn't meant to cut the dandelions. Right? It was meant to kill.

To pierce. A shield from demonic attack. Righteous.

A breastplate of righteousness to hold everything up with the belt of truth. To put on our feet the preparation of the gospel. Peace to have on our head the helmet of salvation.

I just saw, it was actually yesterday at this place where they had the knight's armor, right? And I'm like, how do people even wear that? You're walking around like a big tin man. You know, your sword. But they had all that armor.

Why? To protect them from dying. From being killed. Same thing with Paul says, there is a fight.

And somehow we think, if I could just get this demon out, there would no longer be a fight. Well, if that ever happened, please show me. Write a book on it.

Because I want to live that carefree life where there's no longer struggle. I'm walking in heaven on earth. But you can weaken that stronghold.

You can weaken that grip. And I have seen many people set free. Shane, God just set me free that morning during worship.

I haven't had a cigarette. Or I haven't had this. Or I haven't had lustful thoughts.

I'm set free. Praise God. And that is a gift of God.

And His mercy. And somehow something was released. But regardless of your view in this, there is hope and instruction in 2 Corinthians 12.

We're going to put that up. And you can turn to 2 Corinthians 12. So regardless of what you believe, this is what we need to do.

Because I'm not the type of person who's just going to sit at home and pray that the demon leaves. Right? It reminds me of the man who prayed, Lord, help me overcome alcohol and gambling as he drove to Vegas. How's that going to work out for him? Is God just going to supernaturally turn his car around? I'm heading back to Barstow? How did that happen? Regardless of the view, regardless of your view, here is our hope.

Here is our instructions. We're going to put it up on the screen. 2 Corinthians 12.

If you have your Bibles, you can turn to 2 Corinthians 12 7 through 9. There should be Bibles in front of you as well. And this is Paul writing. Now think about this.

Paul was shown the glories of heaven. Have you ever seen the glories of heaven? Has Jesus ever taken you to heaven and revealed Himself? And there's words I can't even explain. Can you explain? What would you say? Oh, it was so bright, but it was not.

It was brighter than the sun. What's brighter than the sun? Well, it was so pure and holy. I can't explain it.

Like white, like driven snow? No, whiter. You know, you just can't do it justice when you experience God. So Paul was experiencing God.

He was taken up to the third heaven, I believe it says, and this wonderful revelation was given to him by God. So he said, unless I should be exalted, which means because of this vision, and because God didn't want me to be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, look at this, a thorn in the flesh was given to me. Oh, that's a wonderful gift.

A messenger of Satan. So Paul says here that God allowed a messenger of Satan to come against him to keep him humble and broken because of the magnitude of what he saw. Because God knows what's best for us.

The more the flesh is exalted, the more prideful it will become. If Paul says, I haven't dealt with anything, I don't struggle with anything, I saw heaven, I've seen people set free, he'll think he's Jesus. And he'll become prideful and arrogant, so God in his love and his mercy sends a messenger, something to buffet us against being exalted and pride coming in.

So he says this thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan, lest I be exalted above measure. In other words, there's a certain degree of exaltation that God allows. That God lets us look at Paul and say, oh wow, look at what Paul accomplished to God the glory.

There's a certain amount of that, but when you're exalted above measure of what should be allowed, God will do something about that. Concerning this thing, this thorn in the flesh, I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. Sound familiar? Lord, please take this away.

Come on guys, you can relate, right? Nobody's ever prayed this prayer. I'm in the wrong church. Lord, please take this away.

Lord, take this away. Take this away. And God said something interesting.

He said, my grace is sufficient for you. For my strength is made perfect in weakness. Therefore, most gladly, I will rather boast in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

So in a nutshell, Paul was going to be exalted because God was using him in a powerful way. And he gave him, now personally, I believe this could be, what is a messenger of Satan? Could it be demonic harassment? Because people say Paul's eyesight, Paul's maybe lustful thoughts, maybe demonic attack. Nobody knows, so don't try to guess this morning.

Right? Don't try to guess because nobody knows because I believe it can fit your situation. We don't know what it is, but Paul said, this came against me. This thorn in my flesh that would, and buffet means to harass the flesh.

You know when Paul said, I buffet my body. I bring my body into subjection. Did you know that? You're supposed to discipline your body.

It's not the other way around. We're called as believers to discipline our body. From spending to overeating to consuming to attitudes, everything.

We're called, we won't be perfect on this side of heaven, but we're called to discipline our bodies and not allow our bodies to discipline or control us. So it's that same word. When Paul said, I buffet myself, the same word is that Satan came to buffet him.

So is a stronghold a messenger of Satan? I believe that it can. I believe that God can, that Satan can use a stronghold to buffet us and to come against us. Something was sent.

It was, at least it appears to me that Paul didn't necessarily deal with this until this revelation of heaven and he said to God to keep me humble. That's why you should pray, God, don't do that to me. I'll stay humble.

I'll stay humble. Don't send a messenger to humble me. I'll stay humble.

But he sent a messenger to buffet his flesh to keep Paul humble. It's interesting. Weakness and humility go together.

Because what it looks like is when you have this couple things, when you have this messenger of Satan or you have this stronghold, you begin to realize how fragile you are. Right? You're one step away from going back into that lifestyle. You're one step away from failing again.

Lord, I am so weak. That's why Paul said, oh wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from this body of sin? I want to do the things I don't do the things I want to do and I do the things I don't want to do. Sound familiar? So that's the struggle Paul is in.

But that doesn't mean he had permission to cave into it. That just means he identified the struggle there. So how this works is the more you realize your weakness and it humbles you, the more you rely on God and His strength is then seen through you because you humble yourself and God's strength is made

perfect in your weakness.

He exalts. He strengthens. He lifts you up.

And that's how it works. When we walk around strong in our self-discipline, confident in our skill, and self-reliant in our ability, a fall is coming. I need to read that again.

Did you catch that? When you walk around strong in your self-discipline, you ever do that? I'm strong. I'm confident in my skill. I'm self-reliant.

I'm doing so good, a fall is coming. That's why you need to be very careful when you say, I haven't touched whatever for a month. I haven't stumbled in six months.

Look at how good I'm doing. Back away. Because that's fertile soil for the enemy to work.

How do you know God just didn't lift it off in His grace and His mercy and honored your commitment? And now He says, okay, you've got it. I'm going to let the messenger loose. And the thing you thought you had whipped is now whipping you.

Take heed lest you fall. Paul said, take heed lest you fall. Because pride comes in.

So as you stay broken and humble, God will continue to work on that. There's not too many people who fall back into certain patterns when they're broken and humble before the Lord God. It's usually when we get out of that, we start taking pride in what we've accomplished.

It's also a good reminder that God will not use an arrogant man. God will not use an arrogant man. Now, you might say, like I thought, you know, well, He'll use Pharaoh, right? He'll use wicked kings.

No, I'm not talking about using things in His sovereignty. I'm talking about God will not use a proud man to do His will on earth to lead people to the cross. If you want to know God's will, if you want to be used mightily of God, you cannot be a proud, arrogant man.

Actually, God says, it was A. W. Tozer who said, before God can use you greatly, He will hurt you deeply. I didn't like that quote when I first heard it, but it is so true. Isn't it? Because to truly help people, you have to be very humble.

To truly help people, you have to be humble. We've got too many people walking in, they're Bible thumpers, they know Scripture, but the Scripture doesn't know them. The heart hasn't been broken before God.

So before God uses a person, a man or woman mightily, He breaks them greatly. If I had a list, I could show you all the missionaries that we've heard of. Adoniah Jetson, Hudson Taylor, that went on the mission field.

How many lost children? Or they lost their spouse. Or debilitating disease. And God saw them through.

It was in that weakness, in that brokenness that God began to use them. So when a person is proud and lifted up, God can't use them very mightily until He breaks them out of them. That's one of my concerns for young men graduating from seminary.

They're 24 and they're not full of humility. What are they full of? Pride. Pride.

Pride. I'm going to show them off. I'm going to show them all this pride and arrogance.

Look at how well my sermon is prepared. I'm going to give them the Word of God. And God says, for the next 10 years, I'm going to break you and then you'll be ready.

Come back and minister at 34, not 24. Now younger people have that. Don't get me wrong.

There's people that are humble and younger. I know some. But this area of pride, God won't use a proud person unless He can begin to break them.

It was funny, I don't know if I should, I didn't tell it at the first service, but I used to tell this story once a year in Lancaster. But it was this story I heard of a young seminary graduate. He was about 24 and he graduated seminary and he was preparing his sermon the week prior and it meant all the rules of hermeneutics and homiletics, right? It had its introduction, it had its flow, it had its set and structure and he came up there all proud and arrogant and he said, I'm going to tell people the Word of God.

I'm going to have 10 salvations. I am going to have 10. And he's just arrogant and preaching and full of himself.

And God humbled him. He forgot where he was in his Bible. His notes were actually off a little bit and off from where the printer messed up.

And just in utter failure, he felt like an utter failure and in total humility, in total humility and brokenness, he had to walk down the steps in humility and brokenness and sit down. And the old usher next to him said, young man, if you would have went up those steps the same way you went down those steps, you would have succeeded. Isn't that true? If you would have went up there in brokenness and humility, God would have used you.

Listen guys, this is the secret to the victorious Christian life. Humble yourself and God will exalt you. You exalt yourself and God will humble you.

And if you expect me to stand up here and tell you how to be humbled perfectly, you've got the wrong guy. Right? Because it comes in to all of us. All of us struggle with pride.

But the difference is, is it a struggle or is it a lifestyle? Are we admitting, saying, Lord, I need you. I can see pride flaring up. Keep me humble, Lord.

Keep me broken before you and truly mean it. Because a lot of people pray that, right? You've got a big prayer meeting. Oh, Lord, keep me humble.

You don't mean a word of that. You just want to show people how humble you are. God's got your number.

So it has to be genuine humility. So was this thorn given to Paul by God? Was it a demonic attack? Was it a physical eyesight or something? We don't know because it can pertain to all of us. Sickness, doubt, fear, depression, debilitating health, lustful thoughts, we don't know.

But I'm going to share one key with you that I hope is really helpful. That's been helpful for me. When it comes to this era of making a stronghold weak, I would remove all probable causes as I pray and seek God.

So I hit it from a demonic angle, I hit it from a medical angle, and I'll hit it from a health angle. Because all of them can influence us in some degree. It can be a demonic attack.

It can be something that we can't quite explain that's happening medically in our body. It can happen from our DNA. It can happen because of poor health.

You look at all areas and you seek God for wisdom. Let me give you just an example of what I mean. I heard recently, a couple weeks ago, about a seven-year-old boy, I think he was.

He was having suicidal thoughts and he was drawing pictures of him killing people. And his mom was just beside herself. What is going on? Look at this big change.

What in the world? Well, what would we say right off the bat? He's got a demon. Right? He's got a demon. No.

If that's not a demon, I don't know what is. Well, they decided to get a CAT scan and wouldn't you know, a golf ball sized tumor was riding up against that portion of the brain. So, as soon as it was removed, the boy was back to normal.

But how many times do we look for the medical advice instead of God and seeing if it's a demonic stronghold? Or how often do we look to all these but ignore how we could be treating the body? The health. Do you know, our body affects a lot more than you think. I'm just throwing this out there.

Maybe I haven't been to huge healing crusades, but the majority of people that I've seen healed and restored and renewed is because they went back to good stewardship of this gift that God has given them. Straight up. There's no way around it.

I don't know if it's God or not, but this is so ironic. I just prayed for a lady at the first service who was almost in tears, about ready to have a breakdown because she's lost 70 pounds and she feels all these addictions coming back. I can't stop eating.

I'm stopping by getting donuts. That's a major thing. If you ever went through that, you know exactly how big that is.

So I'm praying. I'm getting ready to pray for her. And just like this, I felt, well, tell me about, I'm eating healthy.

Well, what does that mean? What does eating healthy mean? She said, lots of bread, lots of fruit. I said, well, and talked about glucose. I won't get into all that now, but she was actually fueling her sugar desire.

And I said, any caffeine? She goes, oh, coffee throughout the whole day. I'm like, well, you know what that does? That triggers your insulin response. That triggers your sugar levels.

And you'll begin craving all of these things. Why am I struggling with this? If I just prayed, Lord, let her loose of this demonic, and we just went into power of prayer, that would have done nothing. Nothing.

Because it was physical. She needs to change her diet completely around and start feeding the body what it needs to remove all of that addiction. Because you're giving your body something that keeps releasing insulin.

That's a dangerous thing if there's too much. Because you have this strong desire. Ever heard of a sweet tooth? Where does that come from? Because you're fueling the thing.

So see, if I don't help her on health, what's this going to do? Right? Go to the doctor. Get her on antidepressant. No, don't do that.

Go to the doctor. Get her on a statin drug. No, don't do that.

See, you have to look at all these things. It's either spiritual, it's other areas, or it's health. And this is an area.

It's funny, I didn't say this to you guys at the beginning, but I actually apologize to the first service. Because for many years, this is interesting, hear me out here. For many years, I've been afraid to help people in this area of health.

Because it's not the priority. Right? The fear of man. I don't want to hear about that.

Just pray for me. But God has been showing me a lot lately. I've gifted you.

I've given you knowledge in this area. Why don't you help? Why do you care for them spiritually, but not physically? And it's conviction, right? Because we don't want to hear about it. We don't want to talk about it.

But granted, you don't make the whole sermon about it and talk about it all the time. But to ignore the physical makes no sense to me. I've seen people get off of three different medications when they take care of the physical.

I've seen them throw Xanax in the trash when they get off of caffeine. So what should I do? Oh, I'm not going to tell you about that secret. Let's pray for the demon side of it.

Oh, let's just pray for the demon side of it. And let's just pray for oh, it must be in your genetics. You know? Why should we miss this other element? Because of the fear of man.

Because people don't want to hear it's the bottom line. And isn't that funny? I have no fear of man when it comes to the gospel. I mean, I'll preach to atheists, which you heard at the college.

There's 30 of them right there taunting me, preaching the gospel, right? And their looks. But when it comes to this area, that shouldn't be in church. Really? Said who? I'll just tell you this.

80% of the things I'm praying for next door, I know people could be greatly helped if they would take care of their physical. That's very frustrating for me. Because I know, I'll pray for you and God can just say it.

Right? God can heal miraculously. We pray for it, I believe it. Alzheimer's, to MS, multiple sclerosis, to Parkinson's, I'm praying for you, I'm believing.

All these things. I'll do it. But let's not ignore this other side here.

Because we reap what we sow. If we don't take care of what God has given us, you don't think that's going to come with consequences? Of course it does. We need to wake up to that.

So that's one thing. I apologize to the first service. Apologize to the second service as well.

Silent Shane is no more silent. Because I'm... Don't clap yet. This is normally when people get out and walk out sometimes.

I've had that happen. But I'm actually took me... I've been sitting on a manuscript for four years. I finally finished it in the last two months.

I'm getting edited on this topic. Of fasting and feasting, what works, what doesn't, and why. But I'm scared of what people would think.

That's not... You shouldn't be focusing on that. God's been on my heart. I even got a strong letter of rebuke from a lady who worked... God gives her sometimes words of wisdom or different things and writes it out.

Fill with the Spirit of God. You know when you meet someone and she said, you need to stop being scared, worrying about the fear of man. And this I'm like, are you kidding me? Like Lord, what? Show me.

I'm ready. And it finally dawned on me. It's not because of the gospel stuff.

It's because the other things. You don't want to help people. You know a great deal, Shane, but you don't want to help them.

You want to pray for their cancer, but why don't you tell them that maybe their diet might be causing it. Oh, I'm not going there, Lord. I'm not going there.

That fasting can repair much of the stuff you're dealing with. Did you know that? When I start fasting, blurry vision, gone. Joint pain, gone.

Back pain, gone. Arrhythmia, gone. Higher blood pressure, gone.

But let's not talk about that because it's not important. Hogwash. Can I say that word? That's okay, huh? But no, but think about this for a minute.

See, it's not the priority, right? The gospel's a priority. Salvation's a priority. Leading people to Christ.

But if you're going to walk around sick and defeated all of your life and not do things for God, that doesn't make a lot of sense. Now granted, some people I'm going to go visit too this week probably, who are in bedridden. It's not their choice.

Don't get me wrong. Isn't it funny how when people hear what I'm saying, they'll take it out of context so they don't have to make changes. I'm not saying that.

I'm saying for the vast majority of people, we can make changes that will help what we're praying for. Right? Lord, take away these things and a lot of it has to do with physical things. Some has to do with other things.

See your doctor if you need to, but some has to do with demon. How can we just, how do we know which one to do it? Are you that gifted? Are you that gifted to go and say, you know what, this isn't a demonic issue, this is something else. I'll pray for you.

Maybe you are. Then you need to get into deliverance ministry and pray for people. And don't do big conferences.

Go in the hospital. You got the gift of healing? Go walk in the hospital. Let me see you heal.

Go walk down the street. Let me see you heal. Don't blow on people and throw your jacket on them.

Go and do something that has genuine results. Let's see that. Let's see that in action if God has gifted us.

But most people, we have to go after all three areas. And I think that's just wisdom. God gives us wisdom for this area.

Oh well, there's a lot here. I don't know if I'm going to get to it. Maybe next week, right? Anything, when we know what to do, I'm sorry, when we do what we know to be right, we feel better.

But just like Paul, his grace is sufficient. Do you know what grace is? Free and unmerited favor is upon you. So Paul said, in your weakness, my grace is sufficient.

My God's free and unmerited favor is upon you. So his grace is upon you, regardless of the weakness. There's been times, I told this story to you at the first service.

Glad I remembered it. But there have been times when me and my wife haven't always got together. Or got together.

Gotten along, right? Anybody relate? You better all shake your head, yes. Don't sit all, you know, pious this morning. But there have been times I go to speaking engagements sometimes and we're not getting along.

And just before that, I'd say, Lord, my heart's not right. God, please, I don't want to hurt the people that are here to listen. Would you break me of this? And Lord, I'm repenting.

And fire would fall during that sermon. God would visit that place in a powerful way. But wait a minute.

I'm still arguing with my wife. See, God says, in your weakness, when you break, you humble yourself, my strength will come. My grace will be sufficient.

I will still, God says, I will still favor you. Don't beat yourself up about your weakness. Right? We think God's gonna strike me.

He hates me. Now we repent from it. We don't sin.

The Bible encourages to, actually the Bible says, be perfect as your Father in Heaven is perfect. That word means complete, lacking nothing. But it also means that's our goal to shoot for.

To not to sin. But when a person does and they're in bondage, God says, my grace will be on you. My favor's still on you.

You're not gonna lose everything. Turn back to me. I will hold you.

So in your weakness, you fall on your knees and you praise Him. You don't fall back into the stronghold. So let's just end on this verse.

I've got a little bit of time. If you don't take anything away from this today, I hope it's this. Or if you take anything away, I hope it's this.

Sometimes we have a stronghold because we have a weakhold on God. You can just get your phone out, tweet it if you need to. Sometimes we have a stronghold in our life because we have a weak hold on God.

So you have to get that hold back. So let's read 2 Corinthians 10:3. I'm gonna give you some tools right now. For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh.

You're walking in the flesh, but you're not warring according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty in God for the pulling down of strongholds. See, so to me, it doesn't matter what you believe in regard to the demonic realm.

Oh, can a person have one? Can they be possessed? Oppressed? All I know is this. That we are to war. The weapons of our warfare, you're not pulling out the sword and cutting off the devil's head.

You are pulling down that stronghold by praying and fasting and seeking God and worship. That's how you pull it down. Casting down arguments and everything that exalts itself against the knowledge of God.

Bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. So let's talk about those three points and I'll be done. Whether God removes it or allows it, the response is the same.

Pull down the stronghold. Okay? Prayer, not willpower begins the process. Because we usually do this first, don't we? Okay.

Starting tomorrow. Starting tomorrow. I'm not gonna do that again.

Starting tonight, maybe. After this service, I'm never touching Krispy Kreme again. I'm never touching it.

It's not willpower, though. Pulling down heaven to earth. You're asking God.

They're mighty in God. Success is in God, not us. I love willpower.

I love self-discipline because it's a fruit of the Spirit. Would you rather have a young boy working for you who just got out of the Marines or just got off a plane eight hours of Minecraft on TV? Why? Discipline. Oh, you guys are asleep this morning.

I don't have to wake you up. Everybody stand up. Ten jumping jacks.

Okay, so think about that. It's pulling down strongholds. And then worship ignites the heart.

The Word of God keeps you focused in the right direction. You have a renewed mind. So that's how you pull down the stronghold.

Okay, if there's a stronghold in your life, prayer, fasting, worship, the Word of God, everything we talk about begins to bring God's power and authority into your life. What about this one? Cast down arguments. What does that mean? If I said, you know what? You just need to cast down an argument.

Balcony, you just need to cast down an argument. What does that mean? Well, an argument is persuasive speech that leads you away from God. You cast it down.

Do you know every time we go back to a stronghold, every time we go back to an addiction, every time we go back to something God says, stop, it's because we begin to believe the lie and not the truth that sets us free. Isn't that true? I've been doing so good, one won't hurt. Right? I've had a hard day.

There's a lot on my mind. I've been hurt. I'm going to go back to the comfort.

See, you start to believe the lie when you go back to the stronghold. They hurt me. I have a right to do this.

I know we ended terrible. Let's say you're thinking about marrying somebody. This ended terrible six months ago.

I never should talk to them again. They are evil. But I wonder if they've changed.

Right? I'll Facebook and see. Maybe they've changed. Believing the lie, right? Don't watch.

Get away from that Facebook messenger. That's deadly. In the wrong context.

Hear me out here. But believing the lie, right? Believing the lie brings us back into that bondage. That's how the enemy gets in.

Focusing and maintaining the truth keeps us out. Basically, we cast down everything. That's the third point.

Cast down everything that goes against truth. Everything that exalts itself against the knowledge of God. So we have this image here of you in warfare.

Not with a rose in your hand. Looking at the daisies. This is warfare.

So you're putting on your warfare. You're pulling down strongholds. You're casting down everything that exalts itself against the knowledge of truth.

Bringing every thought captive. So here's where the battle is. How many times have we said that? How many times do we have to remember that? This is where the battle is.

This is how we pull down strongholds. This is how you make a stronghold weak as you renew the mind. So whatever that stronghold is.

Anybody deal with depression? Anxiety? Bitterness? Gossiping? Anger? Anger? I pray for people out there all the time. I'm feeling so much anger. Cast down that lie.

What's getting you so angry? What's getting you so upset? And you have to cast that down. It's hard, isn't it? There's somebody used to go here a year ago. And they were murdered in their trials this week.

And it's hard talking to the wife and praying with her and even my own anger. And her, I'm praying, Shane, I'm having all this anger. Pray for me.

You have to take those thoughts captive. Brutal. Brutal.

Killing. You have to take those thoughts captive and renew your mind. Because what happens if you keep dwelling on that? Oh! I know where my mind's going.

I can only imagine the family's mind. So you take that thought captive. You bring it back to the obedience of Christ.

What's the obedience of Christ? Does it line up with Biblical thinking? Is this the mind of Christ? Is this what I should be thinking? Finally, brethren. Paul says, Finally, brethren, whatever things are true and

honest and noble and right, meditate on these things. Bring those thoughts captive.

Don't let the enemy come in and bring in seeds of doubt and anger and misbelief. You hold those. Bring those thoughts captive to the obedience of Christ.

I even want you to read Ephesians 6 if you can. It talks about this. I'm hoping I can get into that.

You should do yourself a favor and read I can recommend possibly from a Christian author, on the power of the brain. What they're finding about the brain. How much capacity to hold.

How do you take what I'm thinking to what I'm feeling to acting? The brain is a masterful piece of design. It's incredible. If you look at all the things that are firing and the functions and how many things are processed in a millisecond and God gave us this wonderful gift that we forget that that's where it all stands and falls.

The power of the renewed mind. The power of the made up mind. Do you realize everything I just mentioned has nothing to do with hands and feet? How are you going to pull down a stronghold? No.

I can sit right here and I can pull down a stronghold. If there's a demonic element to the service, there's people in here that maybe don't want to be here and the devil brought them here and you can feel that oppression. Have you ever been there? I've had to speak in memorial services where you can I feel like you can cut this air with a knife.

And you can pull down that stronghold. I'm not going to say anything. I'm not going to do anything.

I'm going to pull it down by praying and seeking God and relying on the only name that saves. If demons flee when they hear the name of Jesus, why aren't we invoking that more? And I don't mean that half-heartedly or half-heartedly. I don't mean that just really knowing it.

The greater is He that's in you and in me than He that's in the world. And we say in Jesus' name. In Jesus' name.

The demons have to flee. They have to tremble. There's no way you're going to get in a battle where the demons and Jesus are going back and forth and we're watching to see who's going to win.

They actually can't even do anything. Do you realize that? Jesus, when you cast us out, can we go into the pigs? They're asking Jesus for permission of where they can go and what they can do. They even have to do that probably when seeking to harass us.

They can't go be on what God wants them to do. God's not going, oh, I wish those demons would stop harassing Shane. What am I going to do? See, He's in control.

It's His authority. It's His sovereign control. We look to Him and Him alone.

Just read Job sometime. See, I never want God to say, have you considered my servant Shane? Read Job. You know what I'm talking about.

The first couple chapters. So He told Job, have you considered my servant Job? The devil said, you've got a hedge of protection around him. That's where that hedge of protection prayer comes from right there.

You know what a hedge is, right? That's grass. I want a concrete wall. Barrier.

And Job says, yeah, but you've got a hedge around him. God says, okay, you have permission. Maybe it's me, but the devil has to get permission.

So no matter what you're struggling through, it's not the God and the devil going back and forth. Why is God allowing? That's the age-old question. I don't know, because I'm not sovereign.

I'm not Him. But I do know who's in control. I do know who we're to run to instead of the pill or the drink or the whatever.

We run to the one who holds everything in the palm of His hands.

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Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/rrZPRCSbKfc.mp4>

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