

I. Introduction

- A. I was at a gathering of pastors this week. People who do what I do. People who lead churches and youth groups and ministries. About a couple hundred of pastors and leaders.
- B. I told them that over a 16 day span, at Pathway Church, we saw an incredible move of God.
 - 1. The number of people baptized was 237.
 - 2. The number of people saved — people who said they prayed to receive Jesus as their Savior — was 224.
- C. I'm telling them this, and my heart is overflowing. To me, this was astounding, amazing, wonderful. It's the seeds of revival. It's the miracle of God. It's the winning touchdown at a Superbowl. It's the power of the Spirit, and of the gospel, and a display of the presence of God that, for most churches, only comes once in a lifetime... if ever.
 - 1. Sixteen days... of grace that actually IS amazing.
 - 2. I've been a pastor for couple of years (!) and I've never seen anything like this.
- D. And I'm saying this, and my heart is on fire, and I'm in this WOW mode... and pastor after pastor basically pats me on the head, and says, "That's nice."
- E. I'm thinking, that's nice? Are you kidding me? You have no idea! This should be shouted from the rooftops... look at what God is doing!
- F. One of the pastor's wives did my least favorite thing.
 - 1. Pastor Tim and I were talking with her and her husband and another leader... I mentioned how all these people got saved... and then baptized.
 - 2. And she said... Well now you have to follow up with them.
 - 3. I'm thinking... seriously? Can't you celebrate for 30 seconds before you unleash your Inner Pharisee? What is wrong with you? A baby has been born. It's a wonder. It's a miracle... It's incredible... and you skip all that and say... well, you got to feed the baby.
 - 4. Oh, in Christian love, lady, shut up. That's my least favorite thing.
 - 5. I didn't say that. I was nice. You can ask Tim. Besides, I don't know too many other churches that have a 10 step sequenced intentionally designed Grace Pathway to do exactly what she was saying.
- G. But back to happier things.
- H. Have you tried to tell somebody about the last few weekends and had the same thing? You might have tried to explain it, but words just fall short.
- I. There was just something beautiful and tangible and real going on. It's so hard to describe... I get it. I can't blame anybody. We're so used to business as usual it's really hard for it to register when God does something big.
- J. And if you were in that group that got saved or got baptized... I say a big thank you. Your courage inspires me. It inspires all of us. Your willingness to step out of your comfort zone is awesome. I echo this prayer in the Bible.
 - 1. "First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world." (Romans 1:8)
 - a) At least throughout all the churches of Redding.
- K. But today, I want to talk about the next thing.
 - 1. Salvation is the first and essential giant leap forward.
 - 2. Then there's baptism.
 - 3. And now there's another big leap forward I'm going to ask you to take.

II. Strongholds

- A. *"But the inhabitants of Jebus said to David, 'You shall not come in here!' Nevertheless David took the stronghold of Zion (that is, the City of David)." (1 Chronicles 11:5)*
 - 1. This was a castle, a heavily fortified position. It was called a stronghold.
 - 2. And it's located in a place called Jebus, which is the ancient name of Jerusalem, which was in a place called Judah, which is part of the Promised Land, which was the ancestral property of the Jews going back a thousand years before David.
 - 3. But even though it's King David's land, the stronghold is occupied by alien intruders. The Jebusites. For hundreds of years, the Jebusites have been a thorn in the side of God's people.
 - 4. And here they were occupying the highest castle, and taunting David. They said, even if we set our weakest warriors to guard the walls, you could still never get in here (2 Samuel 5:6).
 - 5. We'll come back to King David.
 - 6. But let's fast forward a thousand years to the days just after Jesus.
 - 7. The great leader of early Christianity, Paul, picked up the idea of a stronghold.

B. *“For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,” (2 Corinthians 10:4-5)*

1. Like I said, he picked up the idea of strongholds. Castles. Fortified positions occupied by alien intruders.
2. But he did not mean literal strongholds of bricks and mortar.
3. He meant psychological strongholds. He meant emotional strongholds. Mental strongholds.
4. He meant those places in your soul that are occupied by the forces of darkness. They hold you captive. You’ve been struggling with them for years. It’s an enemy that has set up shop in your psychology — sometimes stretching way back to childhood.
 - a) **A stronghold is a mindset of defeat that causes me to accept as unchangeable a state of affairs that is contrary to the gracious promises of God.**
5. Let me break this one down.
 - a) *A mindset of defeat...* means that the devil has you convinced that the victories, the dreams, the prayers, the ideals that you hope for your life are out of reach. You are a loser. You are a victim. No one will ever love you the way you long to be loved.
 - b) This mindset of defeat causes you *to accept something as unchangeable...* This unchangeable quality is a dead giveaway. The devil wants you to believe that you are damaged goods and you will always be this way.
 - (1) Your defeat is unchangeable.
 - (2) Your struggle is unchangeable.
 - (3) Your dysfunction is unchangeable.
 - (4) Your addiction is unchangeable.
 - (5) Your depression is unchangeable.
 - c) Your damage is too deep, too big, too strong, too severe to ever find healing.
 - (1) For the record, these are all lies.
 - d) So you accept as unchangeable... *a state of affairs that is contrary to the gracious promises of God...*
 - (1) God promised you a promised land, but there are interlopers there. That’s not normal.
 - (2) Meaning a stronghold is the devil’s way of sneaking a new normal into your consciousness, but it isn’t normal, it’s subnormal.
 - (3) The devil’s new normal makes you less.
 - (4) Less joyful. Less happy. Less meaningful. Less loving. Less beloved. Less you.
6. Imagine having a gut full of parasites. There’s a giant tapeworm, sapping your energy. So you’re never fully alive, never fully energized, never fully yourself... and you think that’s just the way it is. To you it’s normal.
7. God designed you to soar with the eagles, but you’re down here pecking bugs with the chickens... and you think that’s just the way it is.
8. These recurrent thoughts are the strongholds. They are interlocking scripts that are looped in your mind. Sometimes they come out of your mouth.
 - a) They run your life.
 - b) They dominate you.
9. I’m going to name some strongholds, and I’m going to call some of them out.
10. Because this is another one of those weeks at church where I’m going to invite you to do something major, something important, and something a little bit dramatic.
11. In a few minutes, I’m going to invite you to get out of your seat and do some major damage to your strongholds...

III. Strongholds

- A. But just so we can be really clear... I’m going to show you a list of possible strongholds. These come from different places in the Bible... lists of sins of the flesh that actually are called Vice Lists.
 1. (Galatians 5:19-21, Ephesians 4:31, Colossians 3:5,8, 2 Timothy 3:2-5, 1 Corinthians 5:10,11, Romans 1:29-31)
- B. Warning, I’m going to step on some toes, and some will be offended and some might be hurt.
- C. I just want you to know I’m speaking with love.
 1. I want you to be free. I want you to be your truest, best, most authentic self, unburied from an avalanche of sin, confusion, pain, and unreality.
 2. I want you to be YOU, infused with the mighty righteousness and grace of Christ.
- D. I’m hoping you can take some first steps into that today.
 1. Drug use, drug addiction (sorcery), weed

2. Alcoholism, getting drunk, partying
3. Rage, temper, anger issues
4. Relationship dysfunction
5. Self-destructive tendencies, suicidal thoughts
6. Eating disorders
7. Bitterness, unforgiving spirit, revenge
 - a) Okay... let's have you do something. I have a lot more potential strongholds on my list.
 - b) On your way in you got a slip of paper and if you can find a pencil or a pen... you can share.
 - c) But I want to invite you to do something. As I go through my list, write down any of these items or even items that are not on my list if they apply to you. Let God's Spirit use God's truth to pull these things out of hiding...
 - d) Write your main strongholds down. Don't put your name on it. Don't look at anyone else's. Just you and God.
 - (1) Here we go, I'll start over.
8. Arrogance, unteachable spirit
9. Sexual addiction
10. Sleeping around, shaking up, adultery, premarital sex
11. Porn addiction
12. Any sexual deviation from "one man, one woman, one lifetime"
13. Gender denial, same sex attraction
14. Seduction, flirtatiousness
15. False teaching, involvement in a cult
16. Rebellion, divisiveness, disrespect of authority
17. Assault, domestic violence, bullying
18. Envy, coveting, jealousy
19. Depression, despair, illness
20. Fear, anxious thoughts, worry
21. Prejudice, racism, sexism
22. Liar, deception, hypocrisy, being a fake or a fraud
23. Occultism, idol worship, witchcraft, horoscopes, ouija boards
24. Theft, criminal behavior
25. Laziness, sloth, entitlement to someone else's work
26. Complaining, murmuring, negativity
27. Gossip, slander, backbiting
28. Obsession, compulsive thoughts/behaviors
29. Unaddressed trauma
30. Unhealthy vows, ungodly vows
31. Can't receive love
32. Legalism, religious spirit
- E. That's my list. Some of that is your life. Some of that is mine.
- F. But here's the most important thing...
 1. When any one of these strongholds dominates your life, YOU ARE NOT YOURSELF.
 2. You are not yourself.
- G. You've probably even said something like that. You blurt out something horrible, and you say, *Whoah! Where did that come from?*
 1. "Gollum."
- H. This is super important. This will help you understand strongholds like nothing else.
 1. **A stronghold is a demonic attack to mutate your IDENTITY into something less than God created you to be.**
 - a) The Son of God has made you free, but the stronghold of Satan makes you an addict.
 - b) In Christ you have peace. In your stronghold, you have stress.
 - c) In Christ you are loved. In your stronghold, you always wonder.
 - d) In Christ you are forgiven. In your stronghold, you beat yourself up over your sins and mistakes.
 - e) In Christ you have power to do all things. In your stronghold, your failures mock you to your face.

- f) In Christ you are cosmic royalty. In your stronghold, you're a nobody.
- g) In Christ you are abundantly blessed. In your stronghold, all you see are your deficits.
- h) In Christ you are rich. In your stronghold, you're broke.
- 2. God designed you to soar with the eagles. But your strongholds make you peck the dirt with the chickens.
- 3. Your identity is broken. Who you are is deformed. A stronghold twists your glorious, Christ-given SELF into something the people who know you and love you hardly even recognize.
- 4. I want to take this even deeper with you, but let's go back to King David.

IV. David

- A. When King Saul died, David became the king.
- B. To cement his rule, all the tribes of Israel sent their armies to support King David, right here in the city of Jerusalem, at the high point called Zion.
- C. But remember, the Jebusites were there. The alien invaders were there. And they said our position is so fortified, and our occupancy is so entrenched, there is nothing you can do to ever get us out of here.
- D. The stronghold was the high point. It was the castle. The central and highest point of all. It was the citadel.
- E. In other words, it's the heart and soul of the life of blessing and prosperity God had for his people.
- F. But when David came against that stronghold, the weapons of his warfare were mighty through God. He had mustered his troops, and there is a census of them in the Bible.
 - 1. Here's the number: 380,221 armed soldiers to take back the citadel.
 - 2. I'm here to tell you that you've got an army mightier than that today.
- G. So there's the citadel.
- H. That is the target. That is what the forces of darkness put in their crosshairs. They target YOU. Your identity. Your self. Your nature. Your deepest, truest, most authentic self as God designed you to be.
- I. When you are this person, you are your most purposeful, most peaceful, most prosperous self, living your most abundant life.
 - 1. When the devil attacks the citadel of a child of God, he attacks your IDENTITY FIRST.**
- J. Who are you? What are you? You're a nobody. You're a worm. You're all wrong.
- K. In our culture today, we are witnessing the pain and the confusion that happens when people confuse their identity.
- L. For David to secure his realm, for David to establish his dominion, he had to take the citadel of his city back from occupying invaders.
- M. And the same things is true for you.
 - 1. For you to secure your realm, for you to re-establish your dominion, you have to take the citadel of your heart back from occupying invaders.
- N. Because the forces of this present world are all arrayed to attack your identity first.

V. Reasons

- A. Every attack on your identity is an attack on your Father-child bond with God, your Heavenly Father.**
 - 1. Just think of how spiritually lost people are when they adopt a false identity.
 - a) Think of how far from God they say are. Mad at God. Bitter. Confused.
 - b) Think how vulnerable they are to confusion. Think of how much pain, and how much deception floods into their heart.
 - c) It's not God's design and not God's fault.
 - 2. I have good news for you today.
 - 3. You have a father who cares for you. You have an all-access pass to the throne room of heaven. You have your father's affection. You have his attention. You have his heart. You are the apple of his eye. You are perfect in his sight. You are never abandoned, never forgotten, never ignored. Your father never leaves you nor forsakes you. He gives you everything you need for a real life with energy and passion. He blesses you constantly with every blessings. His forgiveness is always coming your way. His abundance. His healing power. You make him happy, and he loves you, even on your really bad days. You are royalty. You are glorious. You have a destiny. You have a purpose. You have eternal significance. There is more to you than meets the eye. There is nothing broken in you.
 - 4. This is who you are. This is your true identity and so much more.
 - 5. If we could see you the way angels see you, if God were to lift the veil that hides our eyes from the everlasting heavenly realm, you would shine forth with so much glory that mere mortals would be tempted to worship you. That is how glorious and majestic God has made you to be now that you are in Christ.
 - 6. And this is the very identity that the enemy of your soul sends alien invaders to occupy.

- a) He is deathly afraid you will be you.
- b) He fears you putting your privileged position on parade.
- c) He doesn't want the world to see a man or woman fully alive to God.
- 7. So the devil wants your identity suppressed. He wants your identity deformed. He wants your identity replaced. He's succeeding at epidemic levels in America.
- 8. All so that he can rub your Father-wound raw, and break the bond between you and God.
- 9. That's also why the devil hates all that is happening here at Pathway.
 - a) Because SALVATION is how you GAIN your new identity in Christ. And...
 - b) BAPTISM is how you PROCLAIM your true identity in Christ.
 - c) And today, I want to help you RECLAIM your true identity in Christ.

VI. Strongholds

- A. *"And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it."* (Colossians 2:13-15)
 - 1. The **last part** means that there is no demonic power in your life that hasn't already been defeated by Jesus. He disarmed principalities and powers. He embarrassed them.
 - a) All those strongholds we listed represent a house of cards — a very confusing and influential house of cards — that you can demolish by the power and the name of Jesus Christ.
 - 2. The **first part** means that salvation unlocks your true identity. You become a new creation. You change from death to life. You are 100 percent forgiven forever.
 - 3. And the **middle part** means that the power that made all this happen was when your legal failures, and your debt to God, and all the charges against you, and all the demonic assaults, and all their strongholds... every last bit of all that destructive force was... what?
 - 4. What happened to it?
 - 5. It was nailed where?
 - 6. Nailed to the Cross.
 - 7. Think of that. When Jesus was nailed to the Cross, so were your sins.
 - 8. And so were your strongholds too.
 - a) Your addictions have been nailed to the Cross. Your anger issues, your depression and despair, your suicidal ideation, and on and on. All of it was nailed to the Cross.
 - b) So that when Christ died, his death counts for all of this.
 - 9. You demolish your strongholds by the power of the Cross. The power that breaks you free if the shed blood of Christ on the Cross.
 - a) You can never do this, but Jesus can. Only Jesus Christ paid the price. And only he can set you free.
 - (1) So we're going to nail them to the cross, literally. I'll tell you how in a minute.
 - 10. In other words, strongholds are strongholds because your mind is confused. You've been lied to.
 - a) You need to drive out the invading ideas.
 - b) You need to unravel the web of lies.
 - c) You need to bring every thought of who you are focused on the liberation and life Jesus gained for you when he died on the Cross.
 - d) You need to take back the citadel of your identity and of your mind.
 - 11. And I want to help you do that.

VII. Nailed to the Cross

- A. Going back to where we started:
 - 1. *"But the inhabitants of Jebus said to David, 'You shall not come in here!' Nevertheless David took the stronghold of Zion (that is, the City of David)."* (1 Chronicles 11:5)
- B. Look at the last phrase. The city of David. David took the stronghold of Zion, that is the city of David.
 - 1. David... took back... David.
 - 2. And I want to help YOU take back YOURSELF.
- C. Take back yourself from discouragement, promiscuity, hatred, apathy, greed, materialism, legalism, bad luck, or any other force.
- D. I'm going to invite you to really give some thought to what you write down on that paper...

- E. Because we are going to literally nail your strongholds to the Cross.
- F. We are going to continue our time of worship.
 - 1. *I'm going to invite the worship team to come back on stage.*
- G. During that time, I invite you to do two things... no pressure, it's your choice.

VIII. Response

- A. The first response is this:
 - 1. Take your paper with strongholds on it, get up out of your seat, and bring it right here. Fold it in half, so it's private. Set it in these pails.
 - a) And then you can go back to your seat...
 - 2. As you are doing that, our leaders will take these strongholds, and nail them to the cross.
 - a) Literally hammer them to the Cross.
 - 3. I want to be super clear on this.
 - 4. Your strongholds and your sins... they have already been nailed to the Cross spiritually, by Jesus. That's past tense. It already happened when Jesus died. And it already counted for you in full the day you got saved. So it's already done.
 - a) All we're doing today is reminding ourselves of it.
 - 5. Plus... we are aligning our thoughts with that glorious reality.
 - 6. So you can come up here, and drop your strongholds right here, in this pail, and they'll get nailed to the Cross.
- B. The second way you can respond is this:
 - 1. There is a promise in the Bible. I have taught on it in the past, so I won't teach it today... I'll just read it.
 - a) *"Is anyone among you sick [tired of the fight in body, soul, or spirit]? Let him call for the elders [includes pastors] of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And [even] if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven." (James 5:14-15)*
 - 2. So we're offering this to you as well.
 - 3. And notice... all you need to do is ask for prayer, and even if your sins are the reason for your sickness, they will be forgiven... meaning you will be released from them emotionally and spiritually.
 - 4. Our elders and pastors will be here to anoint you with oil. That means they will put a little dab of olive oil on your forehead or on your hands. Then they will pray for a MAJOR BREAKTHROUGH for you in your stronghold.
 - 5. Let's invite the Spirit of God to work his miracles for the glory of Jesus Christ.