

INTRO: WELCOME TO GRACE NOTES. When you think of the word ‘stronghold’ what comes to mind - a mighty fortress, a safe, secure place - or possibly a habit or mind-set that inhibits a person from being what God made them to be, or doing what God has for them to do? Both are correct. In fact, a synonym for ‘fortress’ is barrier and ‘to fortify’ is to make strong.

Spiritually speaking the word ‘strongholds’ is found once in the New Testament. The apostle Paul used it metaphorically in 2 Corinthians 10:3-4 when describing the Christian’s spiritual battle:

“..though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish STRONGHOLDS.”

Paul spelled out those weapons, he calls ‘the full-armor of God’ in Ephesians 6:14-17, the belt of TRUTH, the breastplate of RIGHTEOUSNESS, the GOSPEL of PEACE, the shield of FAITH, the helmet of SALVATION, and the SWORD OF THE SPIRIT, which is the Word of God. He tells us to dress ourselves in the right places with these and then STAND FIRM.

As Believers in Jesus Christ, we are in a war against the evil one, who continually shoots what Paul calls ‘flaming arrows’ against us so that our natural fleshly ways can be exposed and take over our God-imparted desires. We can either build a spiritual fortress against his darts by using the spiritual weapons given us and WIN, or we can succumb to satan’s attack and let him take us down by setting up his ‘stronghold’ in us.

Another way to interpret the word ‘stronghold’ is ‘something or someone that has a ‘STRONG HOLD’ on a person.’

We all have strongholds – who is in control of yours?

On our program today, our host, Barbara Sandbek, will help us determine the answer to this question - so stay tuned. It might just be what you need to hear today.

Jeremiah 29:11 says that God has a good life plan for each of His children. It's a plan that includes using the gifts and talents God uniquely provides each person to further His Kingdom in some way. To ultimately Glorify God in how we live and what we do is our job as Believers.

But often this is never accomplished – and it can be because of strongholds that weigh us down, make us believe we can't succeed, or keep us so occupied with just living that we never get to the job we are to do.

The story is told of a man passing by a group of large elephants being held by only a small rope around one leg. He asked their keeper why they didn't try to get away. He said that when they were young and smaller they used the same rope to tie them and it was enough. As they grew, they were conditioned to believe the rope could still hold them, so they never tried to break free.

Like elephants, many of us go through life hanging onto a belief that we can't do something. Maybe it's because of past failures or possibly because someone drummed it into us at a young age that we can't. One of my father's favorite things to say to me was "You missed a spot." To this day, I cringe every time someone says that.

I met a lady who shared some of her life with me after a concert. She said she had spent 40 years in depression. Her treatment as a child was such that she was made to feel like she shouldn't even take up space. God showed her through a loss that she had value. She had misplaced her front bridge and couldn't find it. She didn't have the money to replace it. Several ladies from her church raised the needed funds for her. This act of kindness impacted her so much so that her depression left for good.

We should not accept false boundaries, limitations or labels of the past. To break this stronghold, we must CHOOSE to let GO and let GOD change our THINKING.

We CAN change, but we may not choose to because, though we don't like what binds us, we're used to it, comfortable with it, or get sympathy and attention from others because of it.

OLD -or- NEW

By Barbara Sandbek

***We hold on to OLD things though NEW offer more.
It's ground that we've covered...predictable...sure.***

***But God says, "Give it up...let them pass from your life.
They'll give you no peace...just long endless strife".***

***The blessings far outweigh the struggle to change
When God is let free to your life rearrange.***

***He'll make you what you've always wanted to be...
A beautiful person that others can see.***

***It's well worth the effort to give up control
To the One who cares deeply for your very soul.***

***He'll never hurt you for He paid the price.
He gave up His Son so that we'd be in Christ.***

***Resist Him no longer - you're wasting so much
He'll do all the work - all it takes is His touch.***

2 Cor. 5:17 says...

***Therefore, if any man be in Christ,
he is a new creature***

***OLD things are passed away
behold all things are become NEW.***

Anything we hold onto to feel secure, or value more than Jesus, is a stronghold - money, children, being a people pleaser, our status, our possessions...to name a few.

Psalm 9:9 says..

The LORD is a refuge for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble.

We'll never understand God's incredible love and provision for us, or know the joy we can have in being all we were created to be, unless we are willing to step out in faith and give up what is binding us.

Why not open your heart, examine yourself and ask God to show you your stronghold?

***** **WRITER: Steve Chapman**

***** SECRET PLACE *** LENGTH: 3:16**

VERSE 1

*A heart is like a house - one day I let the Savior in
There are many rooms - where we would visit now and then
But then one day He saw that door
I knew the day had come too soon
I said Jesus I'm not ready -for us to visit in that room*

CHORUS 1

*'Cause that's a place in my heart - where even I don't go
I have some things hidden there - I don't want no one to know
But He handed me the key - with tears of love on His face
He said "I wanna made ya clean
Let me go in your secret place."*

VERSE 2

*So I opened up the door - and as the two of us walked in
I was so ashamed - His light revealed my hidden sin
But when I think about that room now -I'm not afraid anymore
'Cause I know my hidden sin
No longer hides behind that door*

CHORUS 2

*It was a place in my heart - where even I wouldn't go
I had some things hidden there - I didn't want no one to know
But he handed me the key -with tears of love on His face
He made me clean - I let Him in my secret place*

TAG: Is there a place in your heart -where even you won't go?

So the question is 'how' do we let things go?

Since strongholds begin in the mind, we need to start there.

Like 2 Corinthians 5:17, Ephesians 4:22-24 also tells us to PUT OFF our old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires, and PUT ON the NEW self, so that we can be made NEW in the attitude of our MINDS, created to be like God in true RIGHTEOUSNESS and HOLINESS.

In Romans 12:1-2 the apostle Paul exhorts us...PRESENT your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be NOT CONFORMED to this world: but be transformed by the RENEWING of your MIND.

God will make the change, but we must put forth the effort. (notice the action verbs - PUT OFF, PUT ON, PRESENT our BODIES, DON'T CONFORM to the world, RENEW our MINDS.)

This can only be done if we are IN CHRIST – having received His free salvation gift, because He gives us the tools to do so.

We can renew our mind through prayer and know that God hears us.

Notice the actions words again in Philippians 4:6-7...

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by PRAYER and petition, with THANKSGIVING, present your requests to God. (Here's what you get) And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your HEARTS and your MINDS in Christ Jesus.

That covers both our minds and our emotions.

Another renewing way is through studying the Word of God, the Bible.

Hebrews 4:12 says why...

...the Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the THOUGHTS and intents of the HEART.

When we call on the Name of Jesus, we'll find POWER to break chains as well.

There is a way out of our strongholds – our chains – there is a better life. Jesus can be your chain breaker and the right stronghold we run to for everything we need in life. Listen carefully to the words to this song.

******* WRITER: Zach Williams Jonathan Smith and Mia Fieldes**

***** CHAIN BREAKER *** LENGTH: 3:12**

VERSE 1

*If you've been walking the same old road for miles and miles
If you've been hearing the same old words and the same old lies
If you're trying to fill the same old hole inside
There's a better life - There's a better life*

CHORUS

*If you've got pain - He's a pain-taker
If you feel lost - He's a way-maker
If you need freedom or savings
He's a prison-shaking Savior
If you've got chains - He's a chain breaker*

*We've all searched for the light of day in the dead of night
We've all found ourselves worn out by the same old fight
We've all run to things we know - just aren't right
There's a better life - There's a better life*

Repeat chorus

BRIDGE

*If you believe it - If you receive it
If you can feel it - somebody testify.*

Repeat 2x more

Repeat chorus

TAG

*If you need freedom or savings
He's a prison-shaking Savior
If you've got chains - He's a chain breaker.*

You've been listening to Grace Notes. If you have been blessed by this ministry, your note of encouragement would be greatly appreciated. You can write to us

**at Sandbek Ministries P.O. Box 581 Fallston, MD 21047
or email us through our web site at www.gracenotesradio.com.**

Join us on our next program. Until then, let your grace notes be a song of praise!