*Introduction*

***Rom 8:31 What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?***

We are more than conquerors says Paul.

We have the Power of God through the working of His Holy Spirit within us.

We have been set free - ***Gal 5:1 It is for freedom that Christ has set us free.....***

Why is it then, with these words ringing in our ears, that so many Christians struggle with our daily lives?

Why aren't we like heroic firefighters, tackling the firey darts of the wicked one, with our spiritual hoses and coming out victorious?

Why do so many of us lack the outer glow one would expect from a person that is saved and has heaven waiting?

To the superficial observer who is looking at the human life, it would seem that life in general is but a confused mixture of darkness and light with no pattern or observable make up to it. Good things come and go and we are happy for a while, then bad things come and go and we are down for a time.

We re up and down like a person bouncing on a trampoline.

Sometimes we get frustrated by our lack of success in both spiritual and material life.

We pray for things but see little or no answer, we want a breakthrough, but it just doesn't come.

Or in our working lives perhaps, we are good at our jobs and we look forward to that promotion, but someone else always pips us to the post.

So if Paul says we are free and we are conquerors, then why is it not happening for me? we say.

Sometimes we see the same thing happening to us again and again. Some people are seemingly prone to accidents and are always doing things to themselves

Financially we just don't seem to be able to get it together, just having enough to get by, but no more, and we just can't break that cycle.

Sometimes our lives feel like we have been struggling against a shadow, something that we do not recognise or understand - we cannot touch it, but its there!

Yet the Apostle Paul, who had a tough life, following Christ said

***Phil 4:11-13 I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. 12 I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. 13 I can do all this through him who gives me strength.***

What had he learnt that had made such a difference to his life, that enabled him to be content, at peace, relaxed - even in the depths of trouble?

Paul had learnt to not dwell on the temporal, but on the eternal -

***2 Cor 4: 17-18 For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. 18 So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.***

Paul had learnt that there are 2 realms which affect our lives:

1. the visible - the here and now, the temporary.

2. The invisible realm - the eternal.

Both these realms affect our lives and shape us. Paul makes it clear that success in life depends on being able to apprehend and relate to that which is invisible and spiritual.

We are looking at Spiritual darkness this morning, and so we come to the main part of our theme which is:

What are these spiritual things that cause us so much in the way of problems? and, of course, how can we overcome them and live freedom lives?

We will not deal with it all today, but God willing we will look at:

Blessings and curses,

Strongholds

and how to demolish those strongholds

How to walk in the armour of God victoriously.

We are going to look at Strongholds this morning, what are they and how we can demolish them.

But first let us remind ourselves of the promises of God that relate to this.

The first thing I want you to notice is this:

***2 Cor 4: 17 For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.***

Whatever we are going through, is nothing in comparison to what will be ours in glory.

This corresponds with the promise that Paul stated in Romans

***Rom 8:28And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who[***[***a***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+8%3A28&version=NIV#fen-NIV-28145a)***] have been called according to his purpose.***

We also know that Jesus promised us:

***Heb 13: 5-6 God has said, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.” 6So we say with confidence, “The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?”***

***1 Cor 15:56-58The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. 57But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.***

***58Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain.***

So, knowing that we have the promises of God to draw upon, what are strongholds and how do they affect us?

From almost since time began, man has fought battles and wars. Having perhaps fought and won over a region the new king would then build a castle or a stronghold that would serve as a safe place from which he could repel enemy forces who would then come against him.

Strongholds, as there name suggests are strong and they hold on!!

If you have ever gone to a ruin of a castle, you would often see a tower like construction in the middle or on the highest part called the Keep.

This Keep was built to withstand the largest threat, it was the place of the last stand. When the Castle walls had been breached the soldiers in the castle would retreat into the keep to make their stand to the last man.

As Christians we will come upon strongholds of satan, these would be places where the occult is practiced and idols worshipped, but they can also be people that satan has a grip on. We may be called upon to pray against the evil spirits within a person, just like Jesus when he came upon a man called Legion

***Mark 5: 9-10 Then Jesus asked him, “What is your name?”***

***“My name is Legion,” he replied, “for we are many.” 10And he begged Jesus again and again not to send them out of the area.***

BUT....

We also build strongholds within our lives.

These are walls we put up to protect us, to stop people getting close to us so that we do not get hurt. We do not want to get hurt again so we build these internal barriers - strongholds.

There are other strongholds that we build.

Pride - Pride is not only a sin, but if not dealt with will become a stronghold.

We are often told that the British are a proud nation, and so we are, after all it was said that the sun never set on the British Empire.

Derek Prince once said the difference between an American and a Brit was that the American would tell you how good he was, the Brit would expect you to know.

Are you proud, do you look down upon others, do you feel that you are better than everyone else?

We say things like "that's just the way it is" or " I'll never change", and although when we first say it we believe it to be true, to continue in that way, and making it a way of life makes it into a stronghold in your life.

Fear can easily set itself up as a stronghold in our lives that will hold us back and prevent us from leading the life God has planned for us.

We could go on.

*Conclusion*

Do you have a stronghold or strongholds in your life, things that hold you back, that stifle your Christian walk, that either you have built or perhaps have come from another source, which we will look at next week if God allows.

There is nothing that God cannot deal with. He has given you power in the blood of Christ to deal with it.

The first thing to do is acknowledge that you have a stronghold and not deny it. The reason for it may not be clear, but you know it is there.

Having acknowledged it, bring it before God and ask for His forgiveness and give it to Him, so that He can deal with it.

God wants you to live a victorious life.

***2 Kings 6:15-17When the servant of the man of God got up and went out early the next morning, an army with horses and chariots had surrounded the city. “Oh no, my lord! What shall we do?” the servant asked.***

***16“Don’t be afraid,” the prophet answered. “Those who are with us are more than those who are with them.”***

***17And Elisha prayed, “Open his eyes, Lord, so that he may see.” Then the Lord opened the servant’s eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.***

There is no stronghold that can withstand the power of God, so why do you struggle with it, why do you let it dog your life, when you can be free.

Ask God to show you the strongholds that you have allowed yourself to build in your life, the ones that are claiming your freedom, and come boldly to the throne of grace and ask for your deliverance in the name of Jesus.

You are the Son/Daughter of the King of kings.

Amen