

What stops you? What's really going on?

(Strongholds and access points)

1. What is a stronghold and how does it impact us?

By now most of you will hopefully have had your original design prayer. We believe by faith that through the people praying for us, God has spoken to us about how He created us to be – our unique original design.

Some of you may not have recognised yourselves in your original design or you may have thought 'I'd like to be that, but can't'.

A stronghold is something that exists in our lives and can stop us fulfilling our original design and being all God created us to be.

A stronghold can be anything opposing God's will for us.

Some of our strongholds we may be aware of and others not, which is why in your stronghold prayer appointment we will be asking God:

Is there anything stopping us being all God created us to be?

Ephesians 6:12

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

2. Types of stronghold and how they can look in our lives

Strongholds can take different forms in our lives. They often take the form of:

Beliefs or Lies

'I'm not good enough', 'nothing good will ever happen in my life', 'nobody likes me'.

Sin Patterns

In response to things that have happened to us, coping strategies that are not of God e.g. addictions, outbursts of rage, constant underlying bitterness, withdrawing from people, isolation.

Demonic

Spirits that have attached themselves to us and influence how we feel, think, behave. Often this is a result of something that traumatic or upsetting that has happened to us e.g. rejection.

It can feel like, no matter how hard we try not to be like this (e.g. rejected) an invisible string is pulling us back to a certain way of thinking, feeling or behaving.

John 10:10

The thief only comes to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give life in all its fullness.

Examples of Strongholds

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> anger | <input type="checkbox"/> gossip |
| <input type="checkbox"/> lies | <input type="checkbox"/> covetousness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> fear | <input type="checkbox"/> sexual immorality |
| <input type="checkbox"/> rejection | <input type="checkbox"/> unrepentance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> self-centredness | <input type="checkbox"/> false spiritualities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> self-righteousness | <input type="checkbox"/> insignificance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> hypocrisy | <input type="checkbox"/> control |
| <input type="checkbox"/> greed | <input type="checkbox"/> perfectionism |
| <input type="checkbox"/> jealousy | <input type="checkbox"/> religiosity |
| <input type="checkbox"/> selfish ambition | <input type="checkbox"/> pride |
| <input type="checkbox"/> independence | <input type="checkbox"/> insecurity |
| <input type="checkbox"/> unforgiveness | <input type="checkbox"/> witchcraft – spiritual |
| <input type="checkbox"/> materialism/worldliness | manipulation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> idolatry | <input type="checkbox"/> occult practice |
| <input type="checkbox"/> idleness | <input type="checkbox"/> procrastination |

3. Entry Points – How do strongholds enter our lives?

Our strongholds are unique, as we have unique lives.

We are looking at the access points into our lives that give Satan 'right of entry'.

We want to ask God 'what has happened in my life that has led to this stronghold operating? For example, why do I feel afraid and anxious?'

Access Points:

- Our own sinful choices
- Love deprivation
- Generational sin
- Word curses and Lies
- Soul ties
- The Occult
- Experiencing trauma

Sinful choices

Disobedience, indulgence (playing with sin) & rebellion.

Ephesians 4:26-27

In your anger do not sin: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold.

Galatians 4:3-9

When we were children, we were in slavery under the basic principles of the world. But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.

Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.

Colossians 2:8

Formerly, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods. But now that you know God—or rather are known by God—how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable principles?

Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again?

See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ

Love deprivation (unmet love needs)

Love sets in value, worth, significance and security into a person – a loved child is happy, hopeful and excited about life.

We are made to be in relationship with God and with each other. Created to enjoy 100% God quality love.

Proverbs 19:22 (NIV):

What a man desires is unfailing love.

No human being can give us this...but God is perfectly able to!

Ephesians 3:14-21

For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.

And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

- **Deprivation of God-quality love**

Love is foundational and fundamental to our personhood

- * God is love
- * We are made in His image

The serpent's first lie to Eve was built on the false accusation that God did not fully know & love them and have their best interests (Genesis 3:1-7)

One of the devastating impacts of accepting this lie, was that Adam and Eve turned their backs on the freely available and perfect love of God and tried to live independently from Him.

- **Impartation of Love**

We receive love from our parents in many ways including:

- Touch (healthy not unhealthy!)
- Focused attention:
 - quality time
 - eye contact
 - being listened to
 - doing stuff together
- Words of blessing:
 - spoken into one's being/deep heart
 - spoken into gifting/ability
 - spoken into the future

When we are deprived of love, especially in the early years of life, the foundation of wholeness and healthy development can often be compromised:

- ❖ we may be left with rejection
- ❖ a loss of significance and security
- ❖ a diminishing of our sense of value and worth
- ❖ our responses to a love deficit begin to influence how we see ourselves, how we perceive others and their relationship to us
- ❖ ultimately it can affect our personalities

Love deprivation can create sinful responses, and move a person into immature and ungodly ways of thinking and behaving.

- ❖ we can develop patterns of desperately trying to capture love and significance
- ❖ we may develop self-protection behaviour to protect ourselves from the hurt of rejection
- ❖ we try to establish significance and security in unwise ways
- ❖ sometimes this can result in forms of idolatry (such as obsession with body image) in an attempt to fill the void

The longer people live in sin responses to love and truth deprivation in their lives, the more these responses can define who they become.

Because we are good at developing coping skills to manage the damage in our lives, it becomes more difficult to see what the real issues are – they are hidden to us.

Sometimes, our "issues" are far more evident to other people than they are to us...

Sometimes they are hidden even to us. But God knows (Daniel 2:21-23), so there is hope!

Key Words

Rejection	Anything less than 100% delight, affirmation and healthy connectedness
Abandonment	When parents are absent
Betrayal	When parents are faithless and betray trust
Withholding	When parents hold back love often out of their own lack of worth and lack of relational skill
Abuse	Physical, verbal, emotional, sexual control Making decisions for their children, pressurising
Smothering	Overly emotional, needy and demanding
Neglect	Lack of attention and care
Conditional love	Love and acceptance held back until behaviour fits.
Performance based acceptance	False expectations, parents needing their kids to succeed!
Dominating	Powerful characters who create fear
Shaming	Making children feel bad about themselves

Generational Sin

We need to understand the reality of generational sin, if we are to overcome it and move into the complete freedom that Christ has won for us.

The Bible outlines the basic truth that in the same way that the blessings of righteousness can be passed on from generation to generation, so the curse of sin can be passed on from one generation to another.

2 Samuel 21:1

During the reign of David, there was a famine for three successive years; so David sought the face of the Lord.

The Lord said, "It is on account of Saul and his blood-stained house; it is because he put the Gibeonites to death." (Israel had previously made a covenant with the Gibeonites to spare them)

- Saul broke the covenant and there were consequences
We often see the fruit in people's lives from generational sin
- Effects do not have a sell-by date, they continue. See here in Exodus:

Exodus 20:1-6

And God spoke all these words: "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me.

You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below.

You shall not bow down to them or worship them;

for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand {generations} of those who love me and keep my commandments.

This can be seen in the following example:

Psalm 112:1-2

Praise the LORD. Blessed is the man who fears the LORD, who finds great delight in his commands. His children will be mighty in the land; the generation of the upright will be blessed

Clearly Stephen connects resistance to the Holy Spirit on generational sin...

Acts 7:51

You stubborn people! You are heathen at heart and deaf to the truth. Must you forever resist the Holy Spirit? But your ancestors did, and so do you!"

A chain reaction is defined as:

"a chemical reaction in which the product of one step is a reactant in the following step'.

Similarly generational sin may be described as a **spiritual reaction** in which the product of one generation's sin – a stronghold - is a reactant in the following generation.

Illustration: The Maori people believe the living are connected to the dead like a rope. The loose ends are the living, yet they are connected to their dead ancestors down the 'rope'.

Word Curses and Lies

A word curse is something spoken over us that we come into agreement with and which stops us being all God created us to be.

For example: `you are just like your father`
 `she will never recover from that`

Proverbs 18:21

The tongue has the power of life and death, those who love it will eat its fruit.

Definition of "curse" in Collins English Dictionary:

1. An appeal to a supernatural power for harm to come to a specific person, group, etc.
2. Something that brings or causes great trouble or harm
3. A saying, a charm, effigy, etc., used to invoke a curse
4. Another word for excommunication – to exclude from the community of life, of believers

Webster's Dictionary:

To afflict, to subject to evil, to blight with a curse, to bring evil or injury on.

- Access points for curses
 - Generational
"people like us don't do, say etc..."
 - Contemporary
especially people in authority e.g. teachers, church leaders, parents etc.

- Lies

John 8:44

Jesus said of the devil:

When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies

When we believe the enemy's lies about ourselves or agree with those who have cursed us, we are believing lies, because we're believing something other than God's truth, which is always to bless us.

Recognising that curses are lies is a significant part of the process of breaking their power over us.

How to break a curse or a lie:

1. Name the word curse or lie
2. Forgive and bless the person who spoke the word
3. Repent of believing it and giving it power in our life
4. Break its power, sever the word curse and rebuke any spirits which are behind it
5. Replace the lie with the truth - usually the opposite. Use the bible to find God's truth

Soul Ties

Spiritual influence from one person to another.

Many soul ties are good but very often we can make unhealthy connections with other people which can cause emotional and even physical damage. These connections can be made by choice, by accident or by default.

Genesis 44:30-32

So now, if the boy is not with us when I go back to your servant my father and if my father, whose life is closely bound up with the boy's life, sees that the boy isn't there, he will die. Your servants will bring the grey head of our father down to the grave in sorrow. Your servant guaranteed the boy's safety to my father.

I said, 'If I do not bring him back to you, I will bear the blame before you, my father, all my life!'

Judges 16:15-21 (Samson & Delilah)

Then she said to him, "How can you say, 'I love you,' when you won't confide in me? This is the third time you have made a fool of me and haven't told me the secret of your great strength."

With such nagging she prodded him day after day until he was tired to death. So he told her everything. "No razor has ever been used on my head," he said, "because I have been a Nazirite set apart to God since birth. If my head were shaved, my strength would leave me, and I would become as weak as any other man."

When Delilah saw that he had told her everything, she sent word to the rulers of the Philistines, "Come back once more; he has told me everything." So the rulers of the Philistines returned with the silver in their hands. Having put him to sleep on her lap, she called a man to shave off the seven braids of his hair, and so began to subdue him. And his strength left him.

Then she called, "Samson, the Philistines are upon you!" He awoke from his sleep and thought, "I'll go out as before and shake myself free." But he did not know that the LORD had left him. Then the Philistines seized him, gouged out his eyes and took him down to Gaza.

Binding him with bronze shackles, they set him to grinding in the prison. But the hair on his head began to grow again after it had been shaved."

Soul ties can be with...

- Family – not just vertically
- Sexual Partners - 1 Corinthians 6:20
- Authority figures
- Friends
- Spiritual leaders or heroes
- Those you feel responsible for: parent, spouse etc.

Breaking it off:

1. Confess sin of false loyalty/idolatry/sexual immorality
- 2. Forgive completely**
3. Release them - no rescue/no rebellion/no vengeance
4. Sever the soul tie through authoritative prayer
5. Rebuke the energising spirits
6. Surrender yourself to the Lord and receive the infilling of the Spirit

The Occult (hidden things)

Three main areas: (taken from: I believe in Satan's Downfall by Michael Green)

- **Magic**

The attempt to bring the spirit world under our control
The opposite of true faith, which is surrender and obedience

- Black Magic
- White Magic

- **Fortune Telling**

The desire for knowledge, information, secret understanding and therefore power to act and prosper

- **Spiritism**

The attempt to contact the dead.

Deuteronomy 18:9

When you enter the land the LORD your God is giving you, do not learn to imitate the detestable ways of the nations there.

Exodus 22:18

Do not allow a sorceress to live

1 Corinthians 8:4 & 10:20

So then, about eating food sacrificed to idols: We know that an idol is nothing at all in the world and that there is no God but one...

No, but the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God, and I do not want you to be participants with demons.

Acts 16:16-18; 19:19

Once when we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling.

This girl followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved." She kept this up for many days.

Finally Paul became so troubled that he turned around and said to the spirit, "In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!" At that moment the spirit left her.

A number who had practised sorcery brought their scrolls together and burned them publicly. When they calculated the value of the scrolls, the total came to fifty thousand drachmas.

Revelation 22:14

Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city.

LEVELS OF INVOLVEMENT

Unwitting involvement

- Objects
- Generational inheritance
- Naive foolishness
- Sexual union with demonised partners
- TV/films
- Games
- Under demonic influence but not actively engaged/desiring the power

Dedication to false god or initiated into false religion as children

False Religions = Idolatry (meaning 'without substance'). Behind all false religions lies demonic deception.

Very often this leads to volitional involvement.

Low level volitional involvement

- Reading horoscopes/playing with Ouija boards/attending séances...
- Infrequent/occasional/seen as amusing, playful and harmless.

Active and purposeful commitment

- Consistent, committed, serious, dedicated to philosophy, beliefs, lifestyle, clothes, initiation rites.

High level involvement; a direct relationship with Satan and Satanic worship

- Initiation rites
- Pacts
- Sacrifices
- Abusive sin
- This can include victims of satanic ritual abuse (SRA)

If any of these things apply, ask someone you trust to pray it through with you.

The Bible has a zero tolerance approach to all forms of witchcraft.

Examples of occult practices

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Amulets
(horseshoes) | <input type="checkbox"/> Feng Shui | <input type="checkbox"/> Ouija |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Astral travel | <input type="checkbox"/> Fortune Telling | <input type="checkbox"/> Palmistry |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Astrology | <input type="checkbox"/> Freemasonry | <input type="checkbox"/> Reincarnation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Automatic writing | <input type="checkbox"/> Graphology | <input type="checkbox"/> Satanism |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cartomancy
(playing Cards) | <input type="checkbox"/> Homeopathy -
some aspects | <input type="checkbox"/> Séances |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clairvoyance | <input type="checkbox"/> Horoscopes | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-hypnosis |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Occult group
attendance | <input type="checkbox"/> Lucky charms | <input type="checkbox"/> Spirit guides |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Crystals | <input type="checkbox"/> Some martial
arts | <input type="checkbox"/> Spiritualism |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Divination | <input type="checkbox"/> Mediums | <input type="checkbox"/> Tarot cards |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dowsing | <input type="checkbox"/> Hypnosis | <input type="checkbox"/> Tealeaves |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Drugs | <input type="checkbox"/> Mind reading | <input type="checkbox"/> Transcendental
meditation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Extrasensory
perception | <input type="checkbox"/> Satanic music | <input type="checkbox"/> Witchcraft white
or black magic |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Occult literature | <input type="checkbox"/> Yoga |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Omens | <input type="checkbox"/> Zodiac charms |

False Religions

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bahai | <input type="checkbox"/> Islam |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Buddhism | <input type="checkbox"/> JWs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Christadelphians | <input type="checkbox"/> Moonies |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Christian Science | <input type="checkbox"/> Mormons |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Druids | <input type="checkbox"/> New Age |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Freemasonry | <input type="checkbox"/> Rastafarians |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sikhism | <input type="checkbox"/> Scientology |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hare Krishna | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hinduism | |

Experiencing Trauma

Experiencing a traumatic event can leave us vulnerable to strongholds. These can be through sin responses, as a coping strategy to what we are going through, demons that seek to attach themselves to our trauma or the thoughts we believe about ourselves as a result of the trauma.

Examples of trauma are bereavement, relationship breakdown, bullying, sickness and accident.

1 Peter 5:6 NLT

Be careful! Watch out for attacks from the Devil, your great enemy. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for some victim to devour.”

Ephesians 4:26-27

In your anger do not sin’: Don’t let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil **a foothold**.

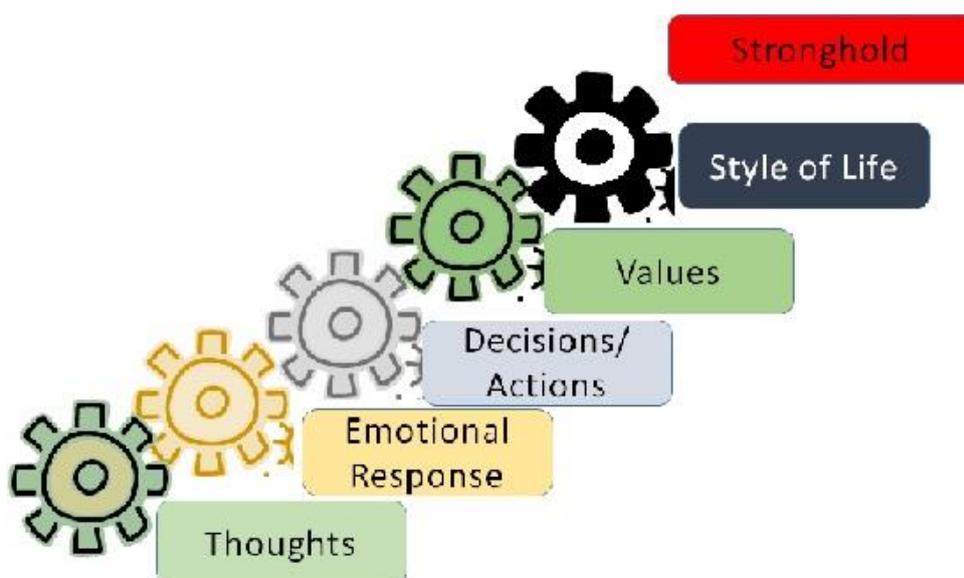
Psalms 107:13 ESV

Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress. He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and burst their bonds apart.

Isaiah 41:10 ESV

Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

How does an entry point become a stronghold?



The strongholds become the scaffolding on which we build our lives.

4. The Good News – BUT GOD!

2 Corinthians 10:3-5 (NLT):

We are human, but we don't wage war as humans do.

We use God's mighty weapons, not worldly weapons, to knock down the strongholds of human reasoning and destroy false arguments.

We destroy every proud obstacle that keeps people from knowing God. We capture their rebellious thoughts and teach them to obey Christ.

and in The Message:

The world is unprincipled. It's dog-eat-dog out there! The world doesn't fight fair. But we don't live or fight battles in that way – never have and never will. The tools of our trade aren't for marketing or manipulation, but they are for demolishing that entire massively corrupt culture.

We use our powerful God-tools for smashing warped philosophies, tearing down barriers erected against the truth of God, fitting every loose thought and emotion and impulse into the structure of life shaped by Christ.

Our tools are ready at hand for clearing the ground of every obstruction and building lives of obedience and maturity.

Paul is telling us a few things here:

We are humans, and live in this world but we are not to fight our battles against spiritual strongholds using our human nature but through our new nature in Christ.

It is our Mighty God who pulls down strongholds through:

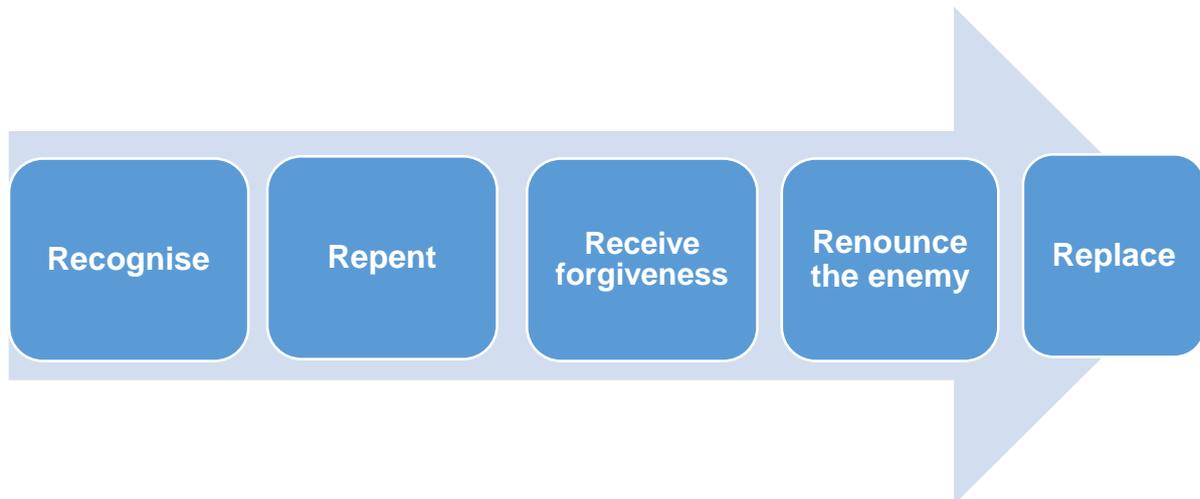
- **God's word** – Hebrews 4:12-13
- **Jesus blood on the cross** – Revelation 12:11
- **The name of Jesus** – Mark 16:17

Our part is through prayer (the Five Rs) and our agreement with and faith in the things listed above.

Through the five Rs we break the legal hold the enemy has over us and God's spirit sets us free.

God has given us authority to use the things above to pull down strongholds. But it is God's power that pulls down the stronghold not ours.

Pulling down strongholds – The Five Rs



5. Continuing to live in freedom

Once God has pulled down the stronghold in our lives then we play our part by coming against anything that is contrary to what God says:

2 Corinthians 10:5 NLT

We destroy every proud obstacle that keeps people from knowing God. We capture their rebellious thoughts and teach them to obey Christ.

We can do that by taking our thoughts captive if they are not in agreement with what God says. Paul knows that many of our strongholds are established in our minds. Our thoughts are so powerful – good or bad. That is why the **Replacing** step in the **five Rs** is so important. We need to continue to live by the truth and keep replacing as we re-train our thinking habits.

Colossians 1:23 NLT

But you must continue to believe this truth and stand firmly in it. Don't drift away from the assurance you received when you heard the Good News. The Good News has been preached all over the world and I, Paul, have been appointed as God's servant to proclaim it.

Think about what you are thinking about!

Some other ways we can continue to live in freedom:

- Be intentional
 - Practise new habits, they don't form by themselves
 - Behave in an opposite way what the stronghold was e.g. faith not fear
 - Be accountable to someone
 - Continue to feed yourself on God's truth
 - Write the truth where you can see it
 - Write down what God has done for you through stronghold prayer and refer back to it
 - Put yourself in the way of people and things that do you good
 - Ask: What's really going on here?
-
- Strongholds are not something for us to fear, we must not let them bring condemnation to us.
It is for freedom that Christ set us free and God so wants us to live the abundant life He has planned for us.
 - God is a God of abundance and always has more for us. Wherever you are at today there is more.
Your future doesn't have to be dominated by your past hurts.
 - Freeing us from the things that hold us back is another example of God's love for us.

Questions to consider

1. How do I feel at the thought of having strongholds in my life? And others knowing about them?
2. Do you have/have you had anything in your life that you can now recognise as a stronghold?
3. Why do we need to repent for things that we didn't choose like generational sin or our response to trauma?
4. Can you think of an example of how an entry point could become a stronghold in your life?
5. How does freedom from strongholds demonstrate God's love for us? What does it mean to you personally?