

Facing My Strongholds as a Prisoner of Jesus Christ

Ephesians 6:10-20

The total annual cost of consumer spending for entertainment in America is 120 billion dollars according to the U.S. Labor Statistics.

Our household spending is up by 5% for entertainment expenditures in the U.S. from last year.

Americans will live from paycheck to paycheck knowing they are not making ends meet, but will still pay \$1,000 for a cable T.V. bill, drop \$25 to \$100 at the movies, or spend money excessively on vacations, sporting events, or shopping. Many times, to deaden the stress and anxiety of their week.

As a nation, we are experiencing increase in our prescription medication with 4.3 billion prescriptions filled at a whopping \$374 billion—trying to medicate our hurts, wounds and our strongholds.

Life has a way of building up on us and accumulating problems and pain. We seek to camouflage our pain and disappointments through drugs, entertainment, sleep, or just staying busy.

We try to cover up our pain, hurt, and difficulties that our families are going through. When asking people how they're doing today, they'll say, 'well I'm just trying to stay busy so I don't have to think about my problems'. We camouflage life's hurts with busyness to hide them from each other.

The problem here is when you get through being busy, when you finish with your entertainment and drugs, your problems are still there.

I call this facing strongholds and bondages.

- A. A stronghold or bondage is an entrenched pattern of circumstances where you don't see any relief from (like the children of Israel who sighed under their stronghold)
- B. To sigh is to be very weary with an ongoing suffering or set of circumstances every day.
- C. Exodus 2:23 says that the children of Israel sighed and groaned while crying unto God in their bondage or their strongholds.
 - A stronghold or bondage could be in your finances
 - It could be relational
 - It could be circumstantial
 - Or emotional
 - It could be physical
 - Your stronghold or bondage could be in your job, career, or at school
 - It could be in your home
- D. Where you see no way out no matter how hard you try
- E. It's like getting up and going to a job and you sigh, saying I hate going to this job—all because you keep experiencing circumstances that put you into a spiritual stronghold. You look forward to quitting time and you sigh again.
- F. Because a bondage or stronghold has to do with where you are at this time in your life

- G. Israel was in Egypt, prisoners to Pharaoh's bondage
- H. Exodus 1:8-10 says now there arose a king who did not know Joseph
- I. Israel in verse 7 was prospering greatly. And as long as you medicate your problems or you allow prosperity to take your mind off of them, you won't sigh and cry unto God
- J. So, verses 9-14 tell us that Pharaoh created a secular humanistic environment to enslave Israel to bondage and strongholds
- K. Egypt made life hard and bitter for Israel. Yet during this time they endured bondages and strongholds as a way of life

Egypt and Pharaoh didn't care about Doctrine, holiness standards, and the Kingdom Community Culture (KCC).

- Like Egypt, you and I face an Antichrist age right here in America. We see it with humanism in our school systems, lawlessness as citizens fight the police, and as Hollywood actors and politicians incite violence on government officials.
- Paul said we must look at the Old Testament, Israel, and Egypt as our examples. To learn from these steps in our walk with God today.
- So, where you and I live right now in America is not our home! We are pilgrims: we live in Egypt, in an age of Pharaoh and Egyptian economic, social, and educational hardships toward Christianity.
- Like Israel in Egypt we too can find ourselves faced with the same spirit in our Egypt.
- We too are facing certain continual circumstances, because, continual sighing is when you mix suffering and groaning together every day. And Israel never made the connection spiritually to their bondage until it got very bad.

So, like Israel, America is not our home, and Satan is the Pharaoh who hates the followers of Jesus Christ.

- a. The more you follow Jesus and His Kingdom Community Culture values, the more the devil will hate you.
- b. The devil doesn't like people who live separated lives unto the Lord Jesus Christ
- c. We can't keep taking personal what family, relatives, or our jobs do to us when, in many cases, the Antichrist spirit has targeted you. Matthew 24:9-14, 10:16-22; John 15:16-20, 16:33
- d. In my opening text, Paul said we are not wrestling with flesh and blood.
- e. The only way you are going to survive and win in your spiritual stronghold is to take on the whole armor of God.

Let me define the whole armor of God

- 1. A rebellious and stubborn mind that I am fully sold out to the Lordship of Jesus Christ
 - No matter what happens to me
 - I fully will make the connection in my bondage and strongholds to Pharaoh hating the name of Jesus that I stand for.
- 2. The whole armor of God is releasing and activating God's grace and power to the face of my stronghold and bondage

So, when I associate myself to the values of Jesus Christ, I alert Pharaoh, the devil—the Egyptian task master.

- So, when you stand up and say I stand for the values of Jesus Christ, there is rejection involved.
- Luke 10:16 — Jesus gives us the power of His grace to you to bear the rejection without compromising your own Christ-centered values.
- Read Matthew 10:32-38

- So, when we put on the whole armor of God against the fiery darts of the wicked, Jesus will give us the grace and courage to take a stance in love against the Egyptian taskmaster, Satan.
- Where I am not ashamed to say to my relatives, coworkers and neighbors that I'm in love with Jesus Christ and His KCC values.
- And this Jesus created the heavens and the earth.
- I choose to draw a line to identify with Him, I'm lining my life up with Jesus Christ, and I'm not afraid to tell anybody and everybody.

We need the power of grace for this.

Read Ephesians 3:1-2

- Paul writes the book of Ephesians in a Roman jail cell from 59 to 61 AD.
- He was surrounded by 420 guards.
- The book of Ephesians is a part of what are known as The Prison Epistles.
- So, our opening text was written by Paul while he was shackled in bondage.
- Yet in Ephesians 3:1, he does not call himself a prisoner of the Roman government. Paul says, 'I am a prisoner of Jesus Christ'.
- In other words, grace through Jesus has allowed him to become a prisoner.

Paul in verse 2 says God has made him a steward of grace to dispense to others while in a Roman prison.

- Paul is putting on the whole armor of God while in circumstantial bondage. His letters are famous all over the world.
- God uses Paul's bondage to catapult power, anointing, and grace to others.

This is putting on the whole armor of God.

- a. Read Ephesians 6:10
 - b. Verse 11 - activate grace; take a stance for the name of Jesus today. Even with your own relatives.
 - Pharaoh is moving in this manner amongst our families with disunity, holiness standards and how to spend money in a godly way. He wants you to question what you believe and convert you back to an Egyptian. Paul warns us that we must stand against the wiles of the devil.
 - When you stand your ground for Jesus, you will Jesus and you will lose some friends. If you compromise with your friends, you lose Jesus.
 - Verse 12
 - This is who your real battle is with. Paul knew this so he called himself a prisoner of Jesus. Paul took a stance while in shackles in jail.
 - Verses 13, 16
 - Take a stance and activate the power of grace
1. Grace to overachieve on an assignment
 2. Grace for relational strongholds
 3. Grace for strongholds in your flesh
 - Paul is in prison telling us to get offensive in our praise, worship and prayer. Because when a loved one walks away from the truth or mocks your truth or suffers and doesn't want to change—that's the fiery dart.
 - You need to take on the shield of faith. And faith works by His love towards you
 - Verses 18-19

- See where extended prayer comes in to empower you with grace, to give you boldness and courage to disciple and win people to God, while you are in a Roman jail cell.

The goal of Egypt is to get you to operate on the values of Egypt and through your hands towards God.

- It finally dawned on Israel that the only way they could get out of their strongholds and bondage was to get desperate and cry out of God.
- They had to make a spiritual connection to their private and personal stronghold.
- They did not consult God while things were going well, but when things got really bad they cried out to God in prayer.
- People stay in bondage a long time when they never make the spiritual connections to their bondage or stronghold. Until we get linked with God in desperate praying, we try to endure and do the best we can in our own circumstances.
- But fasting will help you make the connection.
- Repenting and getting the Holy Ghost and baptized will help you make the connection.
- Crying out in prayer and using God's word will help you make the connections.

We need to go from sleepy catechism prayer to OH God! Crying out praying! In desperation against the Pharaoh who hates the name of Jesus.

Read Acts 4:33, 6:8

His grace will empower me in relational suffering for his name's sake. This is how we put on the whole armor of God

Like Paul, I'm a prisoner of Jesus Christ ready to dispense grace to somebody.

- You say, well I've got way too much against me. I just don't have what it takes. I've given up on praying for my stronghold and circumstance. God wants to still challenge your faith and your praise right now!

Samson was completely outnumbered in Judges 15:14-19

- a. Samson's jawbone represents a donkey's stubbornness—this is your rebellion against the Egyptian task masters.
- b. So, if one of us can send a thousand demons to flight, how many Philistines did Samson kill? A thousand. These are insurmountable odds. He put on the full armor of God in an impossible situation. God gave Samson grace with a jawbone of a donkey. This means to release faith to rebel against nature.
- c. But in verses 18-19, Samson is very weary after a victory
- d. Verse 19, God provides water for Samson so his thirst doesn't kill him
- e. God's grace with His Word, His blood and power are your water right now. But you have to get desperate like Israel and start declaring the Word and swing your jawbone of praise! Swing your jawbone of worship and intercession! For I am a prisoner of Jesus Christ!

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