

Breaking Free

1. Last week we left off with Stephen...debating with some men...from the synagogue of the freed men...standing in the truth of Jesus
 - a. Last week we read a small part of Ephesians 6...reminding us...we don't fight against flesh and blood
 - b. But rather...we are to battle against mighty powers...in this dark world...and against evil spirits
 - c. In other words...we go to war...we are to battle...so that after the battle...we can stand in the truth of our Lord...we are to stand our ground
 - d. What we are studying in the book of Acts...is not necessarily...how to do church
 - e. Because all we have learned about how to conduct church...is to be prayerful...and be bold in preaching
 - f. What we have been primarily studying...is the strategies of the lying spirit ...who is trying to stop the spreading of the gospel of Jesus
 - g. My mind has been opened up...to the little differences...or a better word... little influences...between the purity of the Holy Spirit...vs the lying spirit
 - h. I can say...without question...there are many times in my life...where I have been a slave to the lying spirit
 - i. Where I was a victim of the lying spirit...and when I did the work for the lying spirit

- j. Jesus wants us to work for the kingdom of God...not the lying spirit
- k. Jesus does not want us to be controlled by the lying spirit either
- l. In order to overcome the strategies of the lying spirit...we must first learn to recognize...the differences between the lying spirit...and the Holy Spirit
- m. Once we learn the strategies of the lying spirit...then we need to apply our own strategies...in overcoming the lying spirit
- n. We have seen in the book of Acts...how the lying spirit...is coming against the first church
- o. And how the Holy Spirit...each time...created a path...for the believers...to have **victory over** the lying spirit
- p. Notice the Holy Spirit...doesn't destroy the lying spirit...but rather reveals the truth...to us
- q. Then the Holy Spirit gives the believers...an opportunity to exercise faith in Christ
- r. Did you hear that...the victory comes...through knowing the truth...and then exercising our faith...by living truth
- s. The believers are not fighting against the lying spirit...but rather...by living out their faith...by trusting Christ...this is where the power of God is
- t. There is no way...to list all the ways the lying spirit lies...but these lies all have the same goal...trying to stop the Christian...from living a life of faith
- u. As I was in prayer this week...I wanted to move on...in the book of Acts...but Holy Spirit wanted me...to speak more about the lying spirit
- v. I feel like I supposed to talk about breaking free from strongholds

2. Slide...Strongholds are real

- a. Strongholds are just what they sound like...they are strong...and they hold you...or keep you from freedom in Christ
- b. The apostles were told not to preach Jesus...or risk further backlash...like arrested...or even killed
- c. The Holy Spirit counters these attacks...not by removing these religious leaders from power...but through a jail break...but for what purpose
- d. The Holy Spirit gives the apostles the opportunity to trust God...and they go back to the temple and exercise their faith...and continue to preach
- e. Realize the apostles could have said...no way...I'm not preaching again...I don't want to go back to jail...I don't want to be arrested again
- f. But scripture tells us...they were full of joy...because they were made to suffer for Christ
- g. Realize the option of succumbing to our fears...is the creation of a stronghold...that will keep us...from trusting God
- h. What the Holy Spirit is trying to teach us...is the more I believe Christ...over the liar...the more I want to be bold in my faith...
- i. The more I believe Christ...the less I desire the lies...but rather truth
- j. The more I believe Christ...I no longer want to be a victim of the lies...that keep me from living the true life of faith
- k. The apostles didn't run...they didn't stop...or cry out to God...
- l. The Holy Spirit didn't drag the apostles back to the temple...and say...I told you to stay here and preach Christ

- m. No...what the Holy Spirit gave them...was opportunities to preach Christ
- n. What I have just described...is what the Holy Spirit gives each of us...the opportunity to live out our faith...based on how we believe God's word
- o. Ephesians 6 told us we are to battle...and if we put on God's armor...we will be standing firm...after the battle
- p. The goal of the lying spirit...is to create doubt...fear...so you don't desire to live out your faith
- q. Last week we were introduced to the synagogue of the freed men...who were not free at all...because they were slaves to the lying spirit
- r. Here is the crazy thing...they believed they were doing right for God
- s. They had no clue they were actually under the influence of the lying spirit
- t. Strong holds happen...without us even knowing we have strongholds
- u. Stephen...a Greek speaking Jew...**may have**...at one time...been part of this synagogue...but He heard the truth of Christ...and Christ set him free
- v. I want to share one of my old strongholds that I over came
- w. When Cathy and I were dating...I was the director of worship...at a church ...and Cathy was serving me...honestly...she is the true talent
- x. We dated 2.5 years...my heart knew I wanted to marry her...but I couldn't because of a strong hold...caused by the past hurts of my prior marriage
- y. I was totally afraid to of the commitment...I was totally afraid of being hurt again...I was afraid to trust again
- z. Here I was serving God...in a church that God wanted me in...while I was totally being influenced by the lying spirit

- aa. I believe God allowed this...so I can teach others...how to break free
3. Slide...A stronghold is a self-made protection, usually based on emotional hurts
 - a. I am going to get to scripture here in a minute
 - b. Here is what the lying spirit is good at...lying...lying who you are...about who God is...about the life that you think you are living for God
 - c. Stephen teaches us...something that is so important...that I wanted to take a week...just to teach it...don't allow the lies to penetrate your heart
 4. Slide...Stephen didn't respond to the lies
 - a. Offences only hurt...if you pick offences up...they will enter your heart...this is the key to dealing with offences...don't pick them up
 5. Slide...Picking up the offence is a start of a stronghold
 - a. The lying spirit wants us to become offended...is an opportunity for the lying spirit...to unknowingly build a strong hold in your heart
 - b. How the lying spirit builds a stronghold...is it takes the fact...the offence...or even better...an emotional offence...which causes a hurt
 - c. Then the lying spirit starts to tell you more lies...about the offence
 - d. But what is so clever...as you start to believe these added lies...about this fact or offence
 - e. Each lie we believe...is like adding brick after brick...to sure up the stronghold...and it gets larger and larger
 - f. I will use my stronghold...as an example...after my divorce from my first wife...I was emotionally hurt
 - g. The lying spirit...would tell me...nobody can love you...your kids hate you

- h. All women want is your money...to use you...and if you ever...trust anyone ever again...you will only be hurt again...only this time worse
- i. This was the stronghold I hid behind...and as long as I stayed behind that stronghold...guess what...I felt safe
- j. This strong hold was such a real thing in my heart...that I broke up with Cathy...I was unable to overcome the fear of leaving my stronghold
- k. Here I was a leader in a church...chasing after God...but I was still a victim ...of the liar
- l. It wasn't until the Lord ministered to my heart...and He spoke these words...don't let Satan keep you from what I have for you
- m. What the Lord said to me...made me realize...I had a choice...I could either live as a victim...or battle...for a life of trusting Christ...
- n. God was giving me the opportunity to exercise my faith...my trust in Him

6. Slide...Your past does not define your future

- a. We don't know much about Stephen's past...we are only told about the spiritual gifts he has...after coming to faith in Christ
- b. I would imagine...he is not the same man he used to be...he was one way before...now he is different...The difference is Christ
- c. It is possible...that Stephen...being a Greek speaking Jew...that he came out of the synagogue of the freed slaves
- d. Here is what the Holy Spirit wants you to see
- e. Whatever lie we are stuck in...Christ has made a way for us to break free from the slavery of the lie...or stronghold

- f. Let me back up what I have said with scripture
7. 2 Cor 10:3-5, 3 We are human, but we don't wage war as humans do. 4 We use God's mighty weapons, not worldly weapons, to knock down the strongholds of human reasoning and to destroy false arguments. 5 We destroy every proud obstacle that keeps people from knowing God. We capture their rebellious thoughts and teach them to obey Christ.
- a. The first thing I want us to see...is that Christians don't wage war...the same as humans do...but **we do** wage war...Christians wage war
 - b. Christians wage war in the spiritual realm...using God's weapons...such as truth
 - c. We Christians use God's weapons...truth...ministry...not human weapons...such as bats or guns
 - d. We...you and me...use God's weapons...for what purpose...to knock down strongholds...to shine light into the dark areas of our life
 - e. The reason we knock down the strong holds...is so we...not God...so we can destroy the obstacles... that keep people from knowing God
 - f. This happens when we **capture** our pridefulness...our rebellious thoughts...so we can hear the truth...and check this out...obey Christ
 - g. If I am right...then we should be able to find this again in the Bible
8. Rom 12:1-2, 1 And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him. 2 Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into

a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.

9. Slide...God transforms you into a new person by changing the way you think
 - a. Notice...changing our thinking has what effect...it changes us into a new person...its a verb...meaning there is an action involved
 - b. When we Christians believe Christ...over what the lying spirit is telling us
 - c. We are set free from the slavery of lies...which allows us the freedom...to live a life of faith...
 - d. This change of thinking...gives us the opportunity to change our actions...
 - e. The verb or action needed...is to no longer copy the behavior and customs of the world...or the ruler of the world...the liar
 - f. God took Israel out of Egypt...but each Israelite...had to choose to remove their desire...for the things of Egypt...out the themselves
 - g. God took Israel out of Egypt in the physical...but each Israelite...was given the opportunity to remove Egypt out of their hearts
 - h. Many Israelites were stuck...they believed the lies of the false gods...the lying gods...over the Lord God
 - i. At each turn in the wilderness...there was an opportunity for faith...but so many would rather desire the things of Egypt...than to trust God
 - j. Each day God provided them a new opportunity to follow God...to remove the lies of Egypt out of their hearts
 - k. Every day we...you and me...get to choose...whether or not we are going to exercise faith...by trusting God through our obedience

- l. How do we break the strongholds...by believing the truth...which changes our thinking...then the opportunity to exercising our new thinking...in faith
- m. The synagogue of the freed men...are supposed to be people who are seeking God...but the lying spirit has them caught in a stronghold
- n. They refuse to see the truth...and even speak lies themselves...so they don't have to face their own short comings...hello
- o. The stronghold is so strong...these Pharisees would rather tell lies about Stephen...then face the truth of God's word...that Jesus is their Messiah
- p. Living life in the boldness in truth of God's word...is how the Holy Spirit is going to work through Stephen
- q. Speaking and living...a true life of faith is a hard thing to do...Jesus knew this when He said

10. John 16:1-4, 1 "I have told you these things so that you won't abandon your faith.

2 For you will be expelled from the synagogues, and the time is coming when those who kill you will think they are doing a holy service for God. 3 This is because they have never known the Father or me. 4 Yes, I'm telling you these things now, so that when they happen, you will remember my warning. I didn't tell you earlier because I was going to be with you for a while longer.

- a. In John 15...a few verse before chapter 16...Jesus tells the disciples...that they hated Jesus...so they will hate you also
- b. Jesus also said in this section...the servant is not greater than the master
- c. So what makes us think today...that the world won't hate us too...that the lying spirit won't lie about us too

- d. If we truly are following Jesus...we have to take the same path as Jesus
- e. He was hated...so don't be surprised the world hates us also
- f. What God has given us...is the opportunity to follow Jesus by speaking truth to lies...
- g. So we too...can escape from our strongholds...so we too can be truly free ourselves...and then we help others by teaching truth
- h. What the Holy Spirit wants to do...is wake up the sleeping Christians...who are stuck in the world
- i. So they can take hold of the opportunity given by the Holy Spirit...to expose truth...to the lies...to be set free
- j. Fear and sin...causes us to hide from the light...because of the conflict it brings...which is not easy to deal with
- k. Such as the conflict...that the Holy Spirit causes inside our hearts...when we are not coming into agreement with the truth of God's word
- l. My Bible says...in Philippians 4:13 that I can do all things through Him who strengthens me

11. Rom 8:1-17, 1 So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. 2 And because you belong to him, the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death. 3 The law of Moses was unable to save us because of the weakness of our sinful nature. So God did what the law could not do. He sent his own Son in a body like the bodies we sinners have. And in that body God declared an end to sin's control over us by giving his Son as a sacrifice for our sins. 4 He did this so that the just requirement of the law

would be fully satisfied for us, who no longer follow our sinful nature but instead follow the Spirit.

12. 5 Those who are dominated by the sinful nature think about sinful things, but those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit think about things that please the Spirit. 6 So letting your sinful nature control your mind leads to death. But letting the Spirit control your mind leads to life and peace. 7 For the sinful nature is always hostile to God. It never did obey God's laws, and it never will. 8 That's why those who are still under the control of their sinful nature can never please God.

13. 9 But you are not controlled by your sinful nature. You are controlled by the Spirit if you have the Spirit of God living in you. (And remember that those who do not have the Spirit of Christ living in them do not belong to him at all.) 10 And Christ lives within you, so even though your body will die because of sin, the Spirit gives you life because you have been made right with God. 11 The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as God raised Christ Jesus from the dead, he will give life to your mortal bodies by this same Spirit living within you.

14. 12 Therefore, dear brothers and sisters, you have no obligation to do what your sinful nature urges you to do. 13 For if you live by its dictates, you will die. But if through the power of the Spirit you put to death the deeds of your sinful nature, you will live. 14 For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.

15. 15 So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God's Spirit when he adopted you as his own children. Now we call him,

"Abba, Father." 16 For his Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God's children. 17 And since we are his children, we are his heirs. In fact, together with Christ we are heirs of God's glory. But if we are to share his glory, we must also share his suffering.

- a. Verse 15...is the key of my teaching
- b. Verse 12 We are under no obligation to do what our sinful nature urges us to do
- c. For those who are led by the Spirit of God...or the Holy Spirit...If...If ...If we are children of God
- d. For Christians...**have not...have not** received the lying spirit...that enslaves you...but rather instead...you have received God's Spirit
- e. I want us to see that there is true life in Christ...so that we want to desire the true life in Christ...over the lies of the world
- f. If we continue believing the lying spirit...or stay a victim to the lies spoken about us...it only prevents us from living a true Godly life
- g. If I would have decided to believe the lying spirit about marriage...I would have missed an opportunity to be married to such a wonderful person
- h. Once I understood how the lying spirit tricked me...I started looking at other places in my life I was being tricked also
- i. Then after that victory...I looked for the next lie...and so on
- j. I am going to leave us with the promise from

16. Isa 55:10-13, 10 "The rain and snow come down from the heavens and stay on the ground to water the earth. They cause the grain to grow, producing seed for the

farmer and bread for the hungry.¹¹ It is the same with my word. I send it out, and it always produces fruit. It will accomplish all I want it to, and it will prosper everywhere I send it. ¹² You will live in joy and peace. The mountains and hills will burst into song, and the trees of the field will clap their hands! ¹³ Where once there were thorns, cypress trees will grow. Where nettles grew, myrtles will sprout up. These events will bring great honor to the Lord's name; they will be an everlasting sign of his power and love."