

Taking the Stronghold of Zion

The deep feeling of God over Zion

Zion does something to our affections. When we say “Zion,” that word causes something to reverberate in our being with love, aspiration, and desire. Whenever we speak of Zion or sing about coming to Zion, we can check our insides as believers and realize that there is something within us that corresponds. Even though our mind may not fully comprehend what Zion means, yet our spirit matches what God’s thought is concerning Zion.

Zion is expressed in so many places in the Old Testament as well as in the New Testament. All these passages unveil to us the depth of God’s feeling over Zion. If you want to collect God’s deepest feelings — His purpose, His heart, what He chooses, what He desires, what He is jealous over — you find them all summarized in Zion. Zion is the accumulation of all of God’s thoughts and feelings in their highest form. Nothing is higher in God’s expression than Zion.

God has chosen and desired Zion

In Psalm 132:13 we see the deep feeling of God over Zion: “For the LORD has *chosen* Zion; He has *desired* it for His dwelling place.” Zion is the Lord’s highest choice. It represents both God’s chosen people and God’s chosen place. Thus, all believers are surely the Lord’s choice. Ephesians 1:4 also tells us that we were chosen: “Even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world.” Zion is what the Lord chooses. And not only that, it is what He desires for His dwelling place.

God has a desire and that desire is to have a place to live and to dwell. Zion is where He desires to dwell. These are God’s deep feelings about Zion.

God loves, prefers, and is zealous for Zion

Psalm 78:68 tells us that the Lord “chose the tribe of Judah, Mount Zion which He *loved*.” So the Lord loves Zion, He desires it, and He chooses it. These verses, and many more, unveil the deep feeling of God for Zion. Let us all take some time and just open our spirit and say, “Lord, as I’m enjoying You and praying with this Word, impart to me what You feel so deeply about Zion.” In this way the Lord can communicate into us His feelings and desires for Zion.

Psalm 87:2-3 says, ²“The LORD loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. ³Glorious things are spoken of you, O city of God!” Here the Psalmist makes a comparison: the Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. That means He *prefers* Zion. His preference is Zion. This further unveils the feelings of God over Zion.

Zion is also spoken of at the end of the Old Testament. In the book of Zechariah, we see the recovery of God’s building. The temple was being rebuilt, but enemies had come in to stop the work. So the prophets Zechariah and Haggai came in to speak. They conveyed the Lord’s feeling about Zion, His dwelling place. Zechariah 1:14 says, “Thus says the LORD of hosts: I am *zealous* for Jerusalem and for Zion with great zeal.” The Hebrew word for *zealous* can also be translated “jealous.” His jealousy is over Zion. Then in Zechariah 8:2 we read,

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“Thus says the LORD of hosts: I am zealous for Zion with great zeal; with great fervor I am zealous for her.” Here again we have the feelings of God — great zeal over Zion.

The Lord is great in Zion

We may not fully comprehend what Zion is or what Zion means. Nevertheless, from these verses we can see that, whatever Zion means, God surely has deep feelings about it. Now let us look at Psalm 48:1-2: ¹ “Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in His holy mountain. ² Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion on the sides of the north, the city of the great King.” To say that Zion is beautiful in elevation means that it is a vision for the whole earth to see. Indeed, Mount Zion is the central metropolis of the whole earth.

What is also so significant about Zion is that it is a people, a corporate people, where God dwells. This corporate people makes up the city of the great King. Even the Lord Himself, in the Sermon on the Mount, refers to the city of the great King (Matt. 5:35). The Lord is great in Zion. There is something about Zion that testifies of the greatness of the Lord Himself. Psalm 99:2 says, “The LORD is great in Zion, and He is high above all the peoples.”

All these verses tell us of the greatness of Christ in Zion. In Zion He is preeminent, He is central, He is everything — so all-inclusive, so all-sufficient. We are not talking about a religion or a ritual or just going through the motions. Zion is about a Person who lives and dwells in our midst with His presence. He has become our source, our center, our point of reference, our everything. The Lord is great in Zion.

If as God’s people we are off on a tangent — emphasizing a certain doctrine, tradition, program, or anything else — there will not be an all-pervasive atmosphere of Christ. Something will be deficient. Something will not be quite right, because in Zion He is great.

How the Lord becomes great in Zion

How does the Lord become great in Zion? It happens in our daily life. For example, in the middle of the day, you may be reacting. You may be anxious or hurt. Yet in that experience, you interact with the Lord. You call “Jesus.” You experience not carrying out what wants to leech on to your entire emotional life and thought-life and take you over. Whatever it is — hurt feelings, bitterness, or anxiety — you open to this One: “Lord, You have come into this very environment to be the Savior. I am not the savior of myself. Lord, You are my inner saving

life.” So the Lord becomes great in the middle of the day. And you become a member in Zion who interacts with your King. It is not just that you are coming to church meetings, but day by day, even hour by hour, the Lord is great in Zion.

The Lord also becomes great in Zion when we enjoy the power and effectiveness of His blood. It means more to us to enjoy the blood than to take one moment of a charge laid against us. This shuts the mouth of the enemy. Often we may be taken up with the charge, but God is taken up with the fact that the blood has already cleansed us from that sin. We need to reckon this and speak this and overcome because of the blood of the Lamb (Rev. 12:10-11). In such an experience of enjoying the blood, the Lord is great in Zion. The greatness of Christ does not come by relating to Him as a celebrity in some grand, outward way. Rather, we are experiencing an inner enjoyment of this Person who has become everything to us so that we do not handle ourselves. We are occupied with Him. We handle Him. We hold the Head and we enjoy the constant supply of grace flowing into our being. This is how the Lord is great in Zion.

The multiple applications of Zion

The meaning of Zion is so full. It is so multiple. Zion is so fluid, so moving, because it has to do with the living presence of God in His people. He is not merely a God of yesterday — He is God today! Zion is where He Himself lives and dwells and becomes everything. Zion is the summation of all God’s highest feelings and desires.

In the Old Testament books of the Prophets and the Psalms, the deepest aspirations are related to Zion. And if you are not in Zion, if you are not *there*, you are in a foreign country. You are in Babylon. You are in Egypt. And if they require you to sing one of the songs of Zion, you say, “How can we sing the Lord’s song in a strange land? All we can do is weep and hang our harps on the willows. We have to get to Zion” (Psa. 137:1-4). That means Zion is a place. It is a place where we can sing the Lord’s song because it is the place of God’s choice and dwelling. It is a place we come to. Zion signifies the church, God’s dwelling place. This is one of the multiple applications of Zion.

The earthly significance of Zion

Let us look at other applications of Zion. First, there is earthly Zion (Isa. 59:20; Rom. 11:26). This is the dispensational significance of Zion. It is an earthly place, particularly related to Israel. We know that in 1948 Israel became a nation. This was after being in captivity

nineteen hundred years, from the time Jerusalem was trodden down by the Gentiles (Luke 21:24). Now God has restored Israel. Yet we realize there is a great battle over the existence of this nation.

But what we all need to see, what the whole earth needs to see, is that God's word is on the test. God promised that land to His people, so His word is at stake. There will be a complete fulfillment of all His promises that He gave to Abraham, as Romans says, "All Israel will be saved" (11:26). The Redeemer will come to Zion. One day, Israel will be backed up against a wall, so to speak. Every nation will be against her and she will have no recourse. There will be no one who is a friend anymore. Everyone will be an enemy. Then at the climax of this tribulation, the nation will behold Him whom they have pierced (Zech. 12:10; Rev. 1:7). He will come again, and in His coming, He will defeat all the enemies, and Israel will be established in the thousand-year kingdom. Mount Zion will be there in an earthly way. This is our God. His word has not fallen to the ground.

No matter what is being spoken by this leader or that leader, one day the only salvation for the earthly Zion will be, "This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11). The way they watched Him go is the way He will come back. They will behold Him whom they have pierced, and they will mourn. There will be a fountain opened up in the house of David for sin and uncleanness (Zech. 13:1). Not just individual Jews, but the Jews as a nation, will turn to Him. Then He will say, "This is My people," and they will each say, "The LORD is my God" (v. 9). They will acknowledge Him as their Messiah. This is awesome.

The spiritual and heavenly significance of Zion

This earthly Zion is a physical picture of the spiritual Zion, the heavenly Zion, the church. Hebrews 12:22 depicts us enjoying God in Zion: "But you have come forward to Mount Zion." The verb, "you *have come forward*" is in the perfect tense in Greek, which means you are now in a permanent state of being in Zion. The church's fixed position is Mount Zion.

Verses 22-23 continue,²² "You have come forward to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem; and to myriads of angels, to the universal gathering;²³ and to the church of the firstborn." Here we see that believers today enjoy the spiritual reality of the universal church, which is not limited by time or space. Coming forward to Mount Zion is a present reality in the church. Our enjoyment, our singing, our participation in the living God, and the sense of our spirits enjoying Him

and flowing with one another is not just local. It is universal. We have come to "the spirits of righteous men who have been made perfect," to "the church triumphant," as we say, and to "the church militant." In spirit there is a deep realization of what we have come forward to — Mount Zion.

Zion as a mother supplying grace

The way you can identify Zion is by the joy and release and supply. In the Bible, Zion is referred to as a mother. Consider the phrases "the daughters of Zion" and "the Jerusalem above is free, which is our mother" (Isa. 4:4; Gal. 4:26). So Zion is a supplying mother. Psalm 87:5 says, "And of Zion it will be said, This one and that one were born in her; and the Most High Himself shall establish her." Then verse 6 says, "The LORD will record, when He registers the peoples: This one was born there." And verse 7 adds, "Both the singers and the players on instruments say, All my springs are in you." In these verses Zion is expressed. This one was born in her, that one was born in her. This means we have all been regenerated. Another life has come into us. It is a "grace birth." We did not deserve it, but we were born in her. She is our mother, and as our mother she supplies the grace.

The chief feature about Zion is that it is an atmosphere — an atmosphere of the grace of God with a full supply. When you look at Jerusalem in Galatians 4 and Zion in Hebrews 12, the heavenly city is in the context of grace over against the law and living under a legal system, Mount Sinai, which terrifies you. You can't even touch the law. It is full of condemnation. You don't want to get near it. And the law is set over against Mount Zion, where the grace of God is in abundance and where we can enjoy the full supply of that grace. So whoever you are, whatever you are passing through, whatever your present condition is, there is grace. "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" (Rom. 5:20). All of this tells us that Zion is the place of a constant supply of grace.

Zion and the realm of grace

In understanding the church, we need to understand the grace of God. John 1:16 says, "Out of His fullness we have all received, and grace in exchange for grace." This means I start with grace. My launching pad is grace. I tell the Lord, "Lord, I can't find any merit in myself. I can't come up with anything. I can't justify myself. I can't establish my own righteousness. I have no track record that can merit even that much. Lord, I can't find a starting place. There is nothing I can grab on to. I can't allow my

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Made Friends for Fellowship

In the last issue of *the Christian* we saw that Christ came down to our level and that He raised us up together with Himself to be on His level. To come to our level, Christ, as the Son of God, became a man. He was God manifest in the flesh (1 Tim. 3:16). Then, through His death and resurrection, Jesus brought His humanity into glory, so that now He is the glorified God-man. And the marvelous fact is this: the Lord Jesus brought us with Him! In other words, when Jesus died, rose, and ascended, so did we! He brought us with Him into glory. We were not left behind in our miserable condition. We were taken with Him into glory to be on His level. This is why the Bible tells us that we are risen and seated with Christ in heavenly places (Eph. 2:4-6).

Why did the Lord Jesus do all of this? Why did He go through so much trouble on our behalf? He did it for fellowship! And fellowship requires us to be on the same level. It requires us to be on a common ground. Thus, as staggering as it is to our finite minds, God became a man — He came down to our level — and then He arose from the dead in glory to the Father's right hand and brought us back with Him to be on His level. Now we are *with* Christ. Now we can have *fellowship* with Him. Thank God that Christ did not just pay us a visit. His coming was not a mere "one-time encounter" with us. He did not just appear, impart some religious precepts, and then disappear. No, He came to our level in order to scoop us up to be with Him on His level for a continuous and unending fellowship.

Made friends

The fact that we have been brought up to a common level with Christ is evidenced by the new status we have in Him. In John 15, Jesus told the disciples, "No longer do I call you slaves ...but I have called you friends" (v. 15). What is the difference between a slave and a friend? A slave never has fellowship with his master. This is because they are on two different levels. It would be demeaning for a master to lower himself to the level of his slave, and it would be presumptuous for a slave to elevate himself to the level of his master. But friends are different because they are on the same level. One is not above the other. And as a result, they have fellowship. Brothers and sisters, do we realize that we are the friends of Christ? We are not merely His slaves. We are His friends!

Of course, we all know that the most marked characteristic of a true friendship is openness. We disclose our most intimate matters to our friends. If we never open ourselves to a certain person, that person could at best only be an acquaintance or associate, but not a friend. The essence of friendship is this — a trustful confiding. This was the Lord's thought in John 15. He told the disciples they were His friends "for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you." He said, "A slave does not know what his master is doing" — but a friend does.

The Lord's opening to us

Notice the Lord's words: "All things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you." What does this mean? It means that God has opened His heart to us! He has disclosed the very secrets of His heart. Paul tells us that in past generations God's purpose was hidden from man (Eph. 3:5, 9). God's eternal desire was "kept secret since the world began" (Rom. 16:25). Though Abraham was called "the friend of God," and though God disclosed to Abraham what He intended to do to Sodom and Gomorrah, He never opened the deepest secrets of His heart to Abraham. Indeed, all the great patriarchs, prophets, priests, and kings of the Old Testament desired to see and hear the secret counsels of God (Luke 10:23-24). But apart from Christ, God would not reveal them. They were hidden from man and were only hinted at in the form of promises and prophecies.

But now in Christ, God has fully disclosed to us His eternal desire. He has opened to us that which was hidden in His "depths" (1 Cor. 2:10). He has made known the mystery of His will, which is to head up all things in Christ, to have man in His image, and to have the most intimate, deep, and sweet fellowship with man. He discloses His desire to have His people, the church, as His family, His Body, His house, and His bride.

What an honor! What a privilege! God has opened His depths and disclosed His eternal plan to us. Angels have never received such privileged communications. In fact, Peter tells us that the angels long to look into the things that believers have received (1 Pet. 1:12). It is something awesome and mysterious to them. Thus, it is men, not angels, who are now God's friends; and it is men, not angels, who have fellowship with God — the kind of fellowship in which He opens His heart to reveal His eternal desire and will.

Our opening to the Lord

God has opened to us. Now, in turn, He wants us to open to Him. Fellowship is never a one-way street. It is a two-way street. And God desires that we respond to His openness by a reciprocating openness. We can open our hearts to Him, disclosing everything to Him, confiding our deepest secrets and fears to Him, and casting every anxiety upon Him. This is fellowship, and this is the kind of relationship the Lord desires to have with each of us.

Too often we carry on a relationship of religious pretense with the Lord. Rather than honestly opening to Him, we put on an outward show for Him. We offer perfunctory prayers. We may even try to hide our sins and faults from Him, as if He doesn't see everything we do and are!! Regrettably, this is the "knee-jerk" reaction of fallen man. This is our natural reflex. When we commit a sin, or when we fall subject to our weaknesses, our immediate reaction is to hide from God, deny what we did, and then (as a last resort) blame others. Recall how Adam and Eve reacted after they had sinned in the garden of Eden — they hid from the Lord and even sewed

fig leaves to cover their nakedness. Then, upon being found out by the Lord, Adam blamed Eve, and Eve blamed the serpent (Gen. 3:7-13). This old pattern of hiding, denying, and blaming is still in our fallen flesh. But God has no interest in it. He does not want anything of pretense or falseness. God is in the light. Indeed, He is light! And He wants our relationship with Him to be in the light. That is, He wants our relationship with Him to be characterized by complete openness, honesty, and transparency (1 John 1:5-10).

Of course, when we hide our sins and shortages from God, we end up carrying around a dreadful weight of guilt. As long as we do not open to Him to confess our sins, we are miserable. To make matters worse, Satan always jumps in to accuse us. He is called the accuser of the brothers, and his main activity is to afflict the conscience of the believer with crippling accusations (Rev. 12:10). Why? Because an accused person will never fellowship with God. We can all testify from our own experience that fellowship with the Lord is greatly frustrated when we are under a barrage of accusation.

Cleansed and relieved for fellowship

Though Satan's desire is to accuse and afflict us in order to frustrate fellowship, God's desire is to cleanse and relieve us in order to restore fellowship. God wants fellowship! And we must realize that He has completely taken care of all our sins and weaknesses so that they will never frustrate fellowship again. How? By the blood of Christ. God sent His Son to die on the cross for our sins. And because He became sin for us at Calvary, He suffered the punishment for sins and the severing of fellowship with God that results from sin. Of course, God would never punish the same sins twice. And God would never sever fellowship twice. Christ bore the punishment and suffered the separation already at Calvary. Indeed, during those hours on the cross, Christ was cut off from the Father's fellowship so that we would never be cut off. Now, by the cleansing of His blood, we have fellowship with God. So consider it — we can afford to open to God! We can afford to come to Him with boldness and openly confess our sins to Him. We never need to tremble for fear of God's anger or displeasure or rejection again. Rather, we can come to Him without any trace of fear and tell Him all. Tell Him your sins, your weaknesses, your propensities, your shortages. Tell Him all.

How will God respond? As a Father, He will gladly receive, cleanse, and relieve you. I remember several experiences with my own children when they were younger. On certain occasions, my wife and I would notice that our child's countenance, which was normally happy and lighthearted, had changed to gloom. And if our child's countenance continued gloomy for a few days, we would usually take him into our room, put him up on our bed, and ask him if anything was wrong. After a few probing questions, he would soon start crying and confessing some little trespass he had committed. Now, to us, as the parents, the trespass

was usually insignificant. What was of greater importance to us was that our child had finally been relieved of the burden of guilt that he had been carrying around. We would assure him that everything was okay and that the trespass was forgiven. Immediately, the child's countenance would change. He was freed from the burden of guilt and would run off happy and lighthearted again. Fellowship was restored in the home. Now, is God any different? Of course not. God delights to hear our confession. He rejoices to cleanse us by the blood of Jesus. And most of all, He longs to relieve us of our load of guilt. The result is unhindered fellowship with Him.

Confiding in Christ

We must realize that our openness with Christ extends beyond the confession of our sins. As our Friend, the Lord desires that we would open *everything* to Him. This includes every fear, anxiety, temptation, reaction, perplexity, and hurt. We all know that human life is filled with these things. And we know that these things can inwardly "eat us up." This is why we must learn to cast every inward and outward burden upon Christ. Peter exhorts us to cast all our care upon Him, for He cares for us (1 Pet. 5:7). Care and anxiety are not to be kept in our hands or hearts. Care and anxiety are to be cast upon Christ! Paul says, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God" (Phil. 4:6). Here we are given the way to cast all upon Him — it is by prayer. Prayer is the most effective way to transfer everything in our lives to the Lord.

How often we hold tightly to our fears and anxieties! We may live for days with knots in our stomach and pains in our chest. And we may even think it is spiritual to do so. But true spirituality consists in only one thing — coming directly to the Lord Jesus for fellowship, and committing all into His hands. Is your heart stricken with fear? Come to Christ and cast that fear upon Him. Specifically give it to Him in prayer, and then refuse to take it back. Are you being plagued by a certain temptation? Tell Jesus! Tell Him all about your struggles, and ask Him to empower you every hour with the strength to resist temptation. Are you in a perplexing situation — the kind which seems to have no possible answer? Go to Christ. Go to Him in prayer and commit your way to Him. Learn to fellowship with Jesus instead of turning the matter over and over again in your mind. Just rest in Him, abide in Him, and draw upon His grace.

God wants fellowship! And He has lifted us up, by His death and resurrection, to a most personal and intimate friendship in order that we could have fellowship. Now let us turn every environment into an opportunity for fellowship. As each stress-producing situation and every anxiety-generating circumstance comes our way, may we not resort to a racing mind or to spiraling emotions, but may we all enter into a deeper fellowship with Him.

— Kirk Eland

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good week or my feelings to establish anything before You.” Our starting place has nothing to do with ourself. It is “grace in exchange for grace.” That means it is a constant succession of grace — one grace for another. We start with grace, and we go on with a new grace.

Our relationship with the Lord is bound up with never looking for anything to grab on to, but plunging ourself into the full supply of the grace of God. Otherwise, grace is no longer grace (Rom. 11:6). If our relationship with the Lord is of *works*, it is no longer *grace*. These are two diametrically opposed systems. Works means your energy. It means your resolution — “I won’t do it again.” It means you are going to try harder. It means projecting thoughts into the future that you are going to be a better person. That is works. Grace is pure, sheer mercy and favor lavished on you whether you feel like you deserve it or not. God does it simply because He chooses to do it.

Grace in exchange for grace is in contrast to grace in exchange for the law: “The law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ” (John 1:17). So my starting place is grace. And this grace is based upon the redemption that is in Christ Jesus (Rom. 3:24). Now, if you are feeling unworthy to receive this grace, bring your unworthy feelings to Romans 5:17: “For if by the offense of the one death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.” Then look at verse 21: “In order that just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” So we receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness, and then we reign in life through the One. It really makes a difference whether or not your inner posture is linked with your spirit to a receiving and a thanking and a participating in that life. If inwardly you are linked in that way, then you reign in life.

God’s way is the opposite of the way we think. We are “merit” thinkers. We are “accumulated-good-works” people. Our disposition is that way. But God’s way is to come in and to impart Himself as the gift of righteousness. You don’t work for a gift. You receive a gift. So simply be a good receiver, a good praiser, a person who exercises your spirit to block out all preoccupation with yourself. Then you will be inwardly released and reign in life. But the more we wallow in morbid introspection over ourself — “Woe is me” — the more we will line up with the devil. He likes to talk that way in our mind and accuse and lay charges against us and lay our history before us. He will do everything that he has done to millions of believers throughout the centuries. We must realize that no amount of thought and introspection can

avail for one sin. But just one drop of the blood of Jesus avails for all of it. Hallelujah! There is grace to run this race, and this grace is the gift of righteousness. By this grace we reign in life.

How Zion began

Now we come to a crucial point — taking the stronghold of Zion. In the Old Testament, before Zion became Zion in all its glory, it was a stronghold occupied by the enemy. The first mention of Zion is in 2 Samuel 5:7. In this passage we see that immediately after David was anointed and established as king, he took the stronghold of Zion. In verses 6-9 we read, ⁶ “And the king and his men went to Jerusalem against the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land, who spoke to David, saying, ‘You shall not come in here; but the blind and the lame will repel you,’ thinking, ‘David cannot come in here.’” ⁷ Nevertheless, David took the stronghold of Zion (that is, the City of David). ⁸ Now David said on that day, ‘Whoever climbs up by way of the water shaft and defeats the Jebusites (the lame and the blind, who are hated by David’s soul), he shall be chief and captain.’ Therefore they say, ‘The blind and the lame shall not come into the house.’ ⁹ So David dwelt in the stronghold, and called it the City of David.”

Zion becoming a stronghold of the enemy

Zion is God’s choice. God chose Zion before the foundation of the world. But by David’s time Zion was still a stronghold of the enemy. Satan occupied God’s choice. A foreign thing occupied God’s choice. So how did Zion become Zion? Zion became Zion when David was sent in to take the stronghold. You have to send David in to deal with the stronghold of Zion. No one up to that time, for hundreds of years, could touch the stronghold of Zion. Moses did not do it. Joshua did not do it. None of the judges did it. Years went by. It took David to do it. David is the great type of Christ.

Our Lord Jesus is the Greater David (cf. Rev. 22:16). He passed through incarnation, human living, crucifixion, burial, resurrection, and ascension to be made Lord and Christ. Now He is King of kings and Lord of lords. Jesus is Lord in the universe! He is the reigning King. And now He streams out as a life-giving Spirit into the spirits of all the saints so that Zion could be taken over.

The Lord as the Greater David deals with us as strongholds. Every one of us is a stronghold. Our being is entrenched in sin, in the flesh, in our natural life, in our own goals, in our own aims, in our own purposes. We are all strongholds. And no one can touch the stronghold but Christ. You cannot deal with yourself and I cannot deal

with myself. But there is a David. There is a Christ who goes in and deals with the stronghold.

The way Zion happens — the way Christ becomes everything and the church emerges in God’s economy for His kingdom — is by dealing with the stronghold. We have to learn how to send David into our being to deal with the stronghold, however it is manifested in our being. And when the stronghold is overthrown by David — that is, by Christ, by God’s grace — then it becomes the City of David. It becomes Zion. It becomes God’s purpose. The very thing captured by the enemy becomes the spot of God’s dwelling place on the earth.

The meaning of strongholds

What are strongholds? They are places that hold you. What is the nature of a stronghold? It is a fortress. It is a hold. It is a prison. It is a fortified castle. It is a place of the enemy. And you can find out the strongholds in your life by watching how you get defensive whenever they are touched. One stronghold may be your reasoning mind — you are “always right.” In 2 Corinthians 10:4-5 Paul talks about reasonings being a stronghold. For example, when your wife is talking to you and it is going counter to your reasoning, what happens to you? You get defensive: “What do you mean? That’s not right.” You find yourself inwardly defensive. This could be a symptom that in your being there is a stronghold. And that stronghold is your reasoning mind, your thought-life, which is encircled by reason after reason — why you are right and she is wrong, and why it should be your way. It disturbs the whole atmosphere. Then when someone enters into your home, it is not Zion. It is Babylon — something confusing. But you say, “I have always been this way.” Yes, that is what a stronghold is. You have always been defensive.

So what do you do with yourself? You feel like, “I can’t change. I can’t be different. I’ve tried to be different.” Well, that is the point. You cannot be different. You must come to the point of realizing that you have been taken over by a stronghold and that you are without hope in yourself. But you have to send David in there. That means you have to enjoy a portion of grace in your being to tell the Lord, “Come in, Lord, and operate.”

Overthrowing strongholds by the finger of God

Now let us see how the stronghold is overthrown. In Luke 11:21 the Lord says, “When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his possessions are in peace.” So here is a strong man’s stronghold. Everything is secure. The possessions are in peace. Then the Lord

continues in verses 22-23: ²² “But when a stronger than he comes upon him and overcomes him, he takes from him all his armor in which he trusted, and distributes his spoils. ²³ He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters.”

There is a stronger One who comes in and disturbs that stronghold. We see how it happens in verse 20. The Lord says, “But if I by the finger of God cast out the demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.” Here in Luke He says *the finger of God*. But in Matthew 12:28, the sister passage, He says, “But if I, by *the Spirit of God*, cast out the demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.” So how do you deal with a stronghold and enjoy the grace of God? You do it by simply pointing your finger. You don’t do it by any energy of your own. You do it with the finger of God, the Spirit of God.

When you see in yourself the stronghold of your reasoning mind, you only need to inwardly point your finger at it, saying, “Jesus, I’m sending You in there.” When you say “Lord Jesus,” you are using the finger of God. The finger is the Spirit of God. Just point to the stronghold. Actually identify that reasoning mind and by the finger of God cast out the demon lodged in your reasoning that has frustrated Zion from breaking forth.

By the finger of God we cast out demons. This shows that the strong man is overcome by the Stronger. But God’s way of being strong is not by a brute kind of strength. It is just by pointing the finger. It is just by identifying in the spirit that stronghold. Keep pointing at it. Every time it comes up, keep pointing. You can point by calling “Jesus.” Then watch your spirit. Watch your spirit engage with the Spirit of God to pull down the strongholds.

The different kinds of strongholds

The stronghold may take different forms in each of us, but all of us are a stronghold in one way or another. Yet Zion is waiting to break forth on this earth by Christ coming in to take the stronghold. The way He comes in is by *grace in exchange for grace* — by the finger of God, by Him doing it, by our interacting specifically with Him over the matter.

In 2 Samuel 5 the inhabitants of the land were the stronghold. These inhabitants signify our old life, our old ways, our old habits. “Habit” is in the word *in-habit-ants*, and a habit can be a stronghold. All of us as regenerated believers must know that nothing of our old life can remain. “The old things have passed away” (2 Cor. 5:17). The “old things” refer to the old way of relating, the old friends, the old society, the old places we frequented, the

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old movies, the old parties, the old life. In many of us those have been strongholds.

When the Lord comes into us, for Zion to proceed He has to overthrow these things. Yet you feel you are riveted to your friends. You cannot give up the things you have enjoyed. There is still a temptation there. But there is Someone else within you who is going in another direction. So just use your finger. Just point and say, "Amen, Lord Jesus. I am trusting You. You are the Root and the Offspring of David. I am trusting that by drinking You as the water of life, You will separate me from this world and everything related to my former manner of life." When we turn Christ loose on these strongholds, Zion happens.

Fleshly strongholds

The stronghold comes with feelings of "I can't overcome it." That is exactly the way a stronghold feels. This is what Paul experienced. Listen to how he describes his fleshly stronghold in Romans 7: "I want to do good, but I don't do it. What I hate, that's what I do." It was a vicious cycle. He was discovering that the law of sin in his members was like a stronghold. And by the end of Romans 7, it was so bad that the stronghold overcame him and he had to cry, "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from the body of this death?" That means our body is a stronghold. It is a body of death. We have no way to break out of this. But in Romans 8:1-2 Paul is pointing his finger, so to speak, when he says, ¹ "There is now then no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. ² For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has freed me from the law of sin and of death." This shows us that Paul reigned in life through Christ. The Lord overthrows the stronghold, whatever it may be, by our interaction with Him.

The stronghold of other things

The strongholds may not start as big things. They may start as little things, like watching TV or reading the newspaper, the magazines, and the novels. These little things creep in. But eventually they can become strongholds. Whatever we sow, we will reap (Gal. 6:7). You discover that you are being corrupted, spoiled by the enemy, by the love and the lust for other things, as mentioned in the parable of the sower in the Gospels (Mark 4:1-20).

The stronghold may not be evil things. It may be preoccupation with "good" things. You may be *too* preoccupied with cleaning your house or preparing your

meals. These can be strongholds. This was Martha's experience in Luke 10:40-41. The Lord said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things." In fact, the Greek words indicate that Martha was so strong in her feelings that she was leaning over the Lord when she said, "Lord, does it not matter to You that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to do her part with me." Some of us may be this way. When you see that you are like this, when you are exposed and the stronghold is exposed — when you see that you are more preoccupied with your own little world than with Zion — then it is another occasion to identify it, to point your finger and say, "I by the Spirit of God cast out demons."

The stronghold of addictions

There are also addictive strongholds. Addictions are prevalent today. Sexual addictions. Alcohol addictions. Drug addictions. Eating addictions. These are surely strongholds. So how can Zion happen on the earth when some who are chosen to be Zion are occupied by Satan and taken over by strongholds of addictions? These very addictions which are strongholds today become Zion's fortress and the City of David tomorrow. Our strongholds become avenues to let the grace of God operate to the greatest degree. By the Spirit of God, as the finger of God, we can simply point to and cast out every demonic stronghold. We send Christ, our Greater David, into our being to defeat the enemy and take over the strongholds in our lives. Now, the very strongholds of the enemy become Zion, God's chief joy and highest desire and love. Amazing grace!

— Bill Freeman

the **Christian**

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