

# Thinking Differently VIII — Dr James McDonald Study Notes --Gen. 28-31

October 2, 2016

How to think differently; my hang-ups/strongholds are just that because of the way I think. The reason why another person doesn't struggle with what I struggle with is because they don't think like me.

Strongholds are fortified patterns in our thinking that are stubbornly resistant to God's truth and God's will.

The only way I can remove these strongholds is to first recognize them, asking God to help me see how my thinking is messed up, and then apply the biblical way God gives to my thinking so that He can tear down those strongholds in my life.

We get strongholds from our disposition, family of origin, but mainly from our own decisions.

Take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. Tonight, we are going to begin tearing them down together!

**Gen. 32:1-:** *Strongholds are going to start to fall down for Jacob.* God confronts Jacob and he starts to change; 20 years with Laban, wives, children, and problems; he still holds on to his old ways.

God gives Jacob a taste of his own medicine. He gets to experience what it's like to be on the receiving end of a person with strongholds like him.

**Gen. 32:1-8**

**VV. 9-16,18-21** Strongholds are still present here; still wheeling and dealing.

## **1. Strongholds start to crumble when the consequences reach a crisis point.**

When God lets you feel the weight of the choices you have been making, you start being willing to listen.

Doesn't have to go that way; it can be as simple and clean as I read the Word, feel the conviction of the Spirit, and change the way I think and act.

It takes pain to get on the road to recovery from sinful patterns. Eventually it becomes because we want to avoid pain; then it

becomes less about the pain and more about pleasing God because we love Him.

When the consequences come crashing down because like

Jacob, we are not really sure if this whole listening to the voice and gentle nudgings of God is for us, then pain is inevitable, but there are such huge blessings on the other side.

**VV. 22** Jabbok == country of Jordan today. V.23

So are you marking out what you want God to change and are you really wanting to be different or are you hoping you come through this without discomfoting changes? "I like my life just like it is"; but you aren't asking God, "Do You like my life the way it is?"

## **5 of the Strongest Strongholds**

1. Self righteousness. I don't need God's forgiveness; be fine, I'm a good person. Needed it once, but it doesn't need to happen anymore. Do you look at others and consider yourself better? Wise in your own eyes? Pride in who you are? This is death to godliness and fellowship.
2. Self deception. I don't hear God speak; I don't take the Bible as God speaking to me. I don't take the time to hear from Him.
3. Self loathing. I don't believe God's love. He can't love someone like me. It's the stronghold of believing that love can only be gained through worthiness. We are unworthy, but your

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sense of love only being earned *has to die, needs to die*; it will help you accept God's love for you, and it will help you love unconditionally.

4. Self centeredness. I don't seek God's will; I'm independent; I decide where to go, what to do, and God's will does not factor in. Oh, I may speak of it, but the bottom line is I'm self centered and self willed.
5. Self confidence. I don't want God's help; I'm going to do it myself; I'm going to receive all the recognition.

#### **2. Strongholds start to crumble when you finally get time alone. VV. 23-24** Jacob is all alone.

Quite often God doesn't confront us with our stuff until we are alone. This is genius of "Walk to Emmaus" or retreats, conferences, or "time away with the Lord."

Part of my prayer for what we are doing here on Sunday nights is not

that what I'm saying will be finalized here and now, but that it will get you to thinking, so that later when you are alone with God, He can say, "So, let's talk about what Bill said."

You really want to take some real steps forward? Get alone, with your Bible, a pen and paper, and ask God to speak to you and put His finger on what He wants for you and your life.

#### **When we get alone:**

1. Demands cease. Temporarily you are without responsibility or pressure or expectations. You instead can listen to those things but as they refer to God.
2. Distraction ends. Phones, social media, TV, etc. no longer have my attention; God has my attention.
3. Quiet invades. I can let the Word of God be a mirror where I can see myself for who I really am. I can do real business with God, and He can invade my strongholds.
4. Reflection starts. We tend to have a long list of how others are getting it wrong, but can't tell us one thing that is messed up about ourselves; reflection.
5. God speaks; God takes you to the mat with the full weight of who He is.
6. Sometimes we don't get alone with God because we are afraid He's going to say something we don't want to hear; the truth.

#### **3. Strongholds begin to crumble when God Himself contends with you personally.**

**VV. 24-25** "a man"? Hebrew word ish also translated "Warrior"

**VV. 26-30** So he touches him and dislocates his hip? Jacob says it was God? Who blesses anyway? Who changes names? "You have striven with God."

Wrestling match was a farce, obviously; God could have just crushed him, but God will not go against our desire for Him to work in our lives.

God is so kind and gentle with us, He can pin us, He can make us do whatever He wants, but He lets us decide.

#### **4. Strongholds begin to crumble when God prevails over you physically.**

God disabled Jacob. "It doesn't have to be this way Jacob, but I love you too much to let you go away the same as I found you."

God loves us too much to leave us healthy, financially stable, happy, fat and sassy, and still caught in our strongholds doing damage to ourselves and those around us.

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God would rather see us broken and alone with the weight of all the dumb choices we've made, than stand back passively and let us go on messed up as we are.

#### 4. **Strongholds begin to crumble when God marks you forever spiritually.**

**VV. 27** Did God know his name? Why did he ask him? He needed to hear himself say his name "deceiver" "cheater"=Jacob.

**V. 28** "I'm right now changing your life." "Israel" = winner with God.

**V. 29** Notice the grace; not "it's about time you started acting better," but "He blesses him there."

He limps the rest of his life; reminds him of who he is, the new him.

I'm challenging you to go out from here and get alone, wrestle with God over the stuff that you know He doesn't approve of.

I'm challenging you to go out from here and let God prevail over you. Yield to Him, and let Him mark you for the rest of your life.

When are you scheduling that this week?

*"No way anybody wrestles with God and wins."* Really, so you have wrestled with God, and you always come up from the conflict doing God's will?

No, indeed, God has wrestled with you, and you have won far too many times! Isn't that true?