**“The Battle for the Mind”**

Sunday, October 11, 2020

Just because believers are no longer blinded in their minds by the god of this age” according to 2 Corinthians 4:4; “**doesn’t mean that we don’t face attacks from the enemy.”**

The attacks we face can be **verbal assult**, rejection or isolation, but how we deal with those attacks always centers around what we think about **God**, about what **God has said**, and about **how we think** in our “**mind.”**

**Story:** I really want to share a personal story here with you, but I didn’t like any of the possibilities. Like many of you, I have struggled my whole life with **negative thoughts**. My **words**, my **actions** and my **reactions** to **difficult situations** have always been the result of **what I think in my mind** about **God**, what **God has said**; and **what I think** about myself.

Just talking about it, makes me uncomfortable. So let’s consider …

* **Are you a pessimist or an optimist?**

I tend to be a pessimist, who wants to be an optimist. Every believer here; **faces the enemy in our minds**. The **enemy** wants you to:

* think **negative thoughts**. He wants you to be,
* **Discouraged**, and to feel,
* **Like a failure** as a Christian. Satan attacks your
* **Confidence** in God’s providential care,
* So that you live in **fear**, more than in **faith** in our God.
* Last week we preached on David and Goliath. Was David a pessimist or an optimist?

Many believers are so busy “**fighting the enemy” coming against their minds,** that they have little time to **live out their divine mission**.

* **Is that you or someone you know?**
* **Are you paralyzed by the thought of sharing the gospel?**
* **Is your mind still dealing with a conflict from your past?**
* **Do you deal with thoughts that you are inadequate?**
* **Do past sins haunt you with guilt and shame?**
* **Are you crippled by evil thoughts that bombard your mind?**
* **Is your mind filled with doubts and fears?**

**Paul tells us in Ephesians 6:10-14**

10 Finally, be **strong** in the Lord and in **his mighty power**. 11 Put on the **full armor of God**, so that you can **take your stand against the devil’s schemes.** 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**. 13 **Therefore put on the full armor of God**, so that when the **day of evil** comes, **you may be able to stand your ground**, and after you have **done everything**, to stand. 14 **Stand firm**…

* **You cannot stand, if** your **mind** is telling you to **run and hide** in **fear**.
* **To stand, you must equip yourself with the full armor of God.**
* **To go into battle without God’s help would just be foolish. Paul goes on to tell us about …..**

1. **The Equipment we wear (Eph. 6:13–17)**

Since we are fighting against enemies in the **spirit world**, we need **special equipment,** both for **offensive** and **defensive combat**. God has provided for us the “**whole armor of God.**” Satan looks for that **unguarded area** where he can get a foothold.

But the believer knows that **Christ** has already **conquered Satan**, and that the **spiritual armor** and **weapons** are available to us by **faith. Then, Paul explains these weapons to us…**  first…

* **The girdle of truth (v. 14a). Satan is a liar (John 8:44).**

A believer, **committed to God’s truth**, can **live in that truth** and **use the truth** to overcome Satan’s lies.

* **The shoes of the Gospel (v. 15).**

In Paul’s day, the Roman soldier wore sandals with hobnails in the soles to give him better footing for battle. If we are going to “**withstand the forces of evil**,” then we need the **shoes of the Gospel**. We must be **prepared each day to share the Gospel of peace with a lost world. Then, the gospel will go with us wherever God sends us that day.**

* **The shield of faith (v. 16).**

The **Roman shield** was large, usually about four feet by two feet, made of wood, and covered with tough leather. As the soldier held it, it protected him from spears, arrows, and “**fiery darts**.” The edges of these shields were constructed so the entire line of soldiers could interlock shields and march into the enemy like a solid wall. This suggests that we Christians **are not in the battle alone**. **Faith is a defensive weapon which protects us from Satan’s fiery darts.** In Paul’s day, arrows were dipped in a flammable substance, lit and shot at the enemy. In the same way, **Satan shoots** “**fiery darts**” at our **minds**: he shares **lies**, **evil thoughts**, **doubts**, **fears** and **sinful desires**. By faith we must **quench these fiery darts** “**in our minds”** so that they never light a fire within our hearts.

* **The helmet of salvation** (v. 17).

Satan wants to attack the **mind**, it’s the way he defeated Eve. **The helmet refers to the mind “controlled by God**.” Our **mind** plays a vital role in Christian **growth**. **When God controls the mind, Satan cannot lead the believer astray** and the **truth of God’s Word protects us** from Satan’s lies.

* **The sword of the Spirit** (v. 17b).

This sword is the **offensive** weapon. The Roman soldier wore on his girdle a **short sword** which was used for **close-in fighting**. Hebrews 4:12 compares the **Word of God** to a **sword**, because it is **able to pierce and convict the heart.**  In one sense, the **“whole armor of God**” is a **picture of Jesus Christ**.

* Christ is the **Truth** (John 14:6), and
* He is our **righteousness** and our **peace** (Eph. 2:14).
* His **faithfulness** makes our **faith** possible (Gal. 2:20);
* He is our **salvation**; and
* He is the living **Word of God**.
* **This means that when we trust Christ as Savior, we received “the armor.”**

**And, our Spiritual Energy** **is Prayer** (Eph. 6:18–20)

**Prayer** enables the Christian soldier to “**wear the armor”** and **wield the sword**. **Prayer in the Spirit is where we receive the power** for **victory.**” - **Repeat**

Now, you are ready to face…..

1. **The Enemy**

* Satan was an anointed **cherub** or **angel**. Because of **pride**, Satan was **cast out**, taking with him a host of angelic beings who are now his army of principalities and powers. (Ezek 28:11-19/Isa. 14:9)
* Satan is a **deceiver** and seeks only to **destroy**.
* Just as **God works** in the believers life to make us **holy**, so the **spirit of disobedience** works in the **lives of unbelievers** to **deceive**.
* **The only way to fight this spiritual enemy is with spiritual weapons.**
* We must be **aware** of the **devils schemes** and “**fight back”** with the **Word of God** and **prayer**.

The armor listed above is for **the believers** **protection** and we use them to **bring down** **strongholds** and **defeat the enemy**.

**2 Corinthians 10:3-4**

**3** For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. **4** The weapons we fight with are **not** the **weapons of the world**. On the contrary, **they have divine power** to **demolish/defeat strongholds**.

But still,

1. **War Isn’t Easy:**

* And, war is **ugly**. Our lives and people we love are at **risk**. In war, people get **hurt**, **maimed** and even **killed**.
* When I was a young teen, I was able to box a few times at school. When you’re in the ring, you can see the opponent coming at you, but **Satan is deceptive**. He doesn’t come straight at you and if any piece of the armor is missing, he will swing and hit you before you know what happens.

The word **warfare** in 2 Corinthians 10:4 means “**campaign**.” Paul was not simply fighting a little **skirmish** in Corinth; the attack of the enemy was part of a **larger satanic campaign**.

There are **walls of deception** in the **minds of people**, and these walls (like the walls of Jericho) must be **pulled down**.

**These are “mental walls”, like…**

* **Human Reasoning** that is **opposed** to the truth of God’s Word.
* The **Pride** of **intellectualism** that exalts itself above God.

Paul was **not** attacking intelligence, but **intellectualism** that causes people to “**think they know more than they really do.”**

Many believers today do not realize that the church is involved in **warfare,** and we must fight to win.

When Joshua and his army marched around Jericho for a week, those watching must have thought they were crazy. But because Israel **trusted God and obeyed orders**, **they** **brought down** **the walls of Jericho** and conquered the enemy (Josh. 6:1–20).

* What lies from Satan are **you** listening to?
* Only the **truth** of God can defeat the walls of deception in your mind.

Now, we must win ……

1. **The War for our Mind:**

**Listen to Paul - Romans 12:2**

2 Do not **conform** to the pattern of this world, but be **transformed** **by the renewing of your mind**. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

* **One of Paul’s goals is to completely transform how we think.**

Paul uses the metaphor of **transformation** to describe the “**change” Christ brings to our lives**. Freedom in Christ sets us from **slavery to sin**, and we **no longer conform** to the **ideas**, **philosophies**, or **deceptions** of this world.

The same Word that **brought** the **transforming message of the gospel** will **continue that transformation** through the **renewing of our minds**, giving us the “**mind of Christ**.”

The **Spirit** at work in our **minds, transforms us**, **changing** wrong ideas that leads to the wrong behavior. The **Spirit’s** **transforming work** in our **minds** gives us the ability to **discern** and **approve** God’s will.

If the **world** **controls your** **thinking**, you are a **conformer**; if **God** controls your thinking, you are **transformed**, so now…

**Philippians 4:7**

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will **guard** your hearts and your **minds** in Christ Jesus.

Then, Paul warns us to ….

**5. Guard Your Mind**

Along with guarding our **eyes** and **ears**, we must also guard our **mind**.

Consider what Paul said in **2 Corinthians 10:4-5**:

The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have **divine power to demolish strongholds**. We demolish **arguments** and every **pretension** that **sets itself up against the knowledge of God**, and we **take captive every thought** to make it obedient to Christ.

This passage uses **warfare terminology** for our battle against **sin**. Our enemy is relentless and **lust** is one of Satan’s most commonly used weapons. **Lust** is **mental** as well as **physical**. In the **battle for our mind**, Paul says we must “**take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”**

Satan **bombards** the believer’s mind with **sexual images** and **thoughts and the world system he controls, helps him in this evil plot**.

As the world says, **sex sells** so through the world system which he rules he attacks our **eyes**, our **ears** and our **minds**. So, **by** **guarding the first two**, **we guard the latter**. However,

**A. In order to guard our mind, we must recognize ungodly thoughts and test them against God’s Word.**

David said this in **Psalm 19:7**:

**“The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple.”**

A person who does **not** know the Word of God will have difficulty testing “**what is not good”** and will have difficulty **protecting themselves.** If you don’t know what is true, right and godly, you will find it impossible to **close the door** to temptation from the **fiery darts** of the enemy.

If we are going to **protect our mind**, we must recognize “**what is not godly.”** **Can you tell the difference?**

The **unguarded heart** has **removed the filter** and allowed it to **see** and **hear** conversations and images that **pollute the soul**.

While the **simple** mind **opens** the door to temptation, the **wise** mind **closes** the door.

**B. In order to guard our mind, we may need to command the devil to leave, in Jesus name.**

**Matthew 4:1** says:

**Then Jesus said to him, “Be gone, Satan**!

**How many lives have been destroyed by lust, greed, jealousy, hate and all the baggage that comes with it?** When we **open that door** in our mind and give Satan a **foothold**, we surrender to Satan. The only cure for this demonic stronghold is the **name of Jesus**.

* **Whose winning the battle for your mind?**
* **Just remember, God’s Word tells us how to think:**

**Philippians 4:8**

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is **true**, whatever is **noble**, whatever is **right**, whatever is **pure**, whatever is **lovely**, whatever is **admirable**—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—“**think” about such things.**

* **Does Christ have your mind**? **When Christ has your mind**….

• You won’t be **paralyzed** by criticism.

• The Spirit of truth will give you **peace** in the midst of conflict.

• Your **worth** will be in **who** Christ says you are; not in what others say or think about you.

• Your **faith** will give you the victory over your doubts and fears?

**Psalm 19:7:**

“The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple.”