

1. We are continuing our study this morning about the **Spiritual battle that takes place in our mind.**
2. Our homework last week was to pay attention to our thoughts.
3. I hope you learned some things about yourself by paying attention to your thoughts.
4. I encourage you to continue paying attention to what you think, and also pay attention to the fruit that your thoughts bear.
5. Are your thoughts causing you anger, or fear, or anxiety, or discouragement?
6. As we continue on this morning, we are going to be reading a lot of scripture.
7. Remember, we said that scripture is the weapon that allows us to combat the battle we are in with the enemy.
8. The word of God is what Jesus used when he was tempted, and the truth of the word of God is what allows us to refute the lies of Satan and his attack on our mind.
9. As we consider the idea of taking captive every thought, 2 Corinthians 10:5, and make those thoughts obedient to Christ, I would like to point out that that spiritual victory is not something that generally happens overnight.
10. I want to be clear. I believe in the miraculous power of God.
11. I believe in God's ability to supernaturally work in circumstances and situations and immediately and incredibly transform them for our good.
12. Healing, miracles in our finances. Miracles in our relationships and on and on the list goes.
13. But when we are talking about transforming our mind into a place where God can win and be victorious rather than Satan, we are talking about a discipline.
14. We are talking about something that requires training.
15. The word discipline is very similar to the word disciple.
16. As believers in Jesus, we are not great at living the Christian life the moment we accept Jesus.

17. We become better at living the Christian life as we grow in our faith. As we grow in spiritual maturity. As we grow in our understanding of who God is and what God is like. That's called discipleship.
18. In the new testament, the word disciple is used 52 times, and the word disciples is used 297 times.
19. I hate to break this to you, but no where in the bible are we told to be Christians or to make Christians.
20. We are however explicitly told to be disciples and to make disciples.
21. **John 13:35** *By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."*
22. **Matthew 28:19** *Therefore go and make disciples of all nations.*
23. Both of those statements are made by Jesus. God wants us to become disciples. And being a disciple requires discipline.
24. And anything that requires discipline and training is rarely easy.
25. I don't want to paint the picture that winning on the battlefield of our mind will be easy. It is not. But it is doable with the help of the Holy Spirit.
26. **Galatians 6:9** *Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.*
27. We mentioned last week that one of the things that may characterize our lives is not anything evil or wrong, but rather a habit or a lifestyle that we have adopted without really even thinking about it.
28. And that is simply not paying attention to what we think. In other words, being passive in our thought life.
29. Being passive in our thought life can lead us down some pretty dark places.
30. We may have in fact passively allowed the enemy to take up residence and inhabit (strongholds) areas of our thinking.
31. So, if all the sudden, we start actively paying attention to what we think, and we seek to take back that territory, the enemy will not give up willingly or easily.
32. So therefore, the victories will come gradually, not all at once.
33. I know it is a pretty lame saying, but how do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time. We gain victory in our mind battle one inch at a time.

34. The encouragement that Paul gave in Galatians 6:9 was to keep pressing on. Keep pressing in. keep moving forward.
35. Said another way: don't quit.
36. Sometimes we develop a quitter mentality. Rather than persist, we quit. It just seems easier to quit.
37. We're not looking for the easy route. We are looking for the victorious route.
38. Isaiah 43:1-2 "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. 2 When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.
39. Overcoming the desire or the habit of quitting is not something we achieve ourselves. It's not mind over matter.
40. We can develop a no quit attitude only with the help of God, and in relationship with other believers who will help keep us accountable.
41. Knowing that we have been redeemed by him. That he calls us by name. that we are his and that God protects those who are his.
42. Knowing that whatever circumstances we face, rough waters, swollen rivers, they will not sweep over us.
43. Knowing that though we pass through the fire we will not be burned, and we will not be set ablaze or consumed.
44. Knowing that we are not alone and that there are brothers and sisters in Christ walking with us will help us be victorious.
45. That is the promise of God.
46. I don't know what type of spiritual battle you are facing right this moment but my encouragement to you is don't give up.
47. In Habakkuk 3:19 KJV it says God will make our feet like hind's feet. That is, able to climb on the mountains or heights, which I might add is not easy.
48. The key is in God's help. Habakkuk 3:19 The Sovereign LORD is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to tread on the heights.
49. The way God helps us make spiritual progress is by being with us, and by strengthening and encouraging us to keep going, even in rough times.

50. And one of the ways he is with us is through relationships with other believers. The bible says where two or three are gathered together, he is in their midst.

51. The reality is...trusting in the strength of the Lord is a choice.

Deuteronomy 30:19-20 This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live **20** and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the LORD is your life,

52. But the choice to trust in the help of the Lord is not a one-time choice. It is a daily choice. It is an hourly choice. It is a minute by minute, moment by moment choice to trust in him and not in ourselves.

53. Sometimes our minds can be bombarded by what seems like a million thoughts all at once. Again, that is a tactic of the enemy.

54. But the path to victory begins when we take one thought at a time and we choose, with the help of the Holy Spirit, and with the help of others to think right things and choose thoughts that bring life.

55. In Deuteronomy 3:19 God told the children of Israel to choose life or death.

56. And again, why is it so important to take captive our thoughts, because our thoughts bear fruit.

57. Thoughts may be invisible, but eventually, think the right thing or the wrong thing long enough and it's going to be made manifest in what we say.

58. **Proverbs 18:21** The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit.

59. Again, I point out. This is not a passive endeavor. We have a choice.

60. Because our thoughts eventually become our words, we have to choose thoughts that bring life.

61. Several years ago, we were going to donate a computer to someone who didn't have one.

62. We thought the computer might have some sensitive information on it that we didn't want anyone else to see. So, we reformatted the hard drive.

63. That reformat was a process.

64. First of all, everything on the hard drive had to be erased.

65. Then the operating software had to be reinstalled.
66. Then we loaded some new programs to help with productivity.
67. Now, I am not suggesting that the way to have victorious thoughts is for God to erase everything from our minds.
68. We're not talking about worldly meditation, which is simply trying to think nothing.
69. Rather it is a process where the Holy Spirit helps identify thoughts that might not be healthy. The Holy Spirit helps us give up or lay down those thoughts, and then the Holy Spirit, through the word of God, and with the help of other believers, establishes new truth.
70. Paul gives a perfect example of this in **Ephesians 4:22-24** you were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; **23** to be made new in the attitude of your minds; **24** and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.
71. That sounds easy enough, but we all know it is not easy.
72. I read a statement recently that I could identify with.
73. Anything worth doing will at times seem like three steps forward and two steps back.
74. Progress will be slow. But if we will consistently choose to allow our minds to be dominated by the truth of God's word, over and over again, then eventually our minds will be renewed.
75. Again, we go back to the instructions God gave the children of Israel before they were to take possession of the promised land.
76. I believe the truths we find there are applicable to this battle in our minds.
77. **Deuteronomy 1:6-8** The LORD our God said to us at Horeb, "You have stayed long enough at this mountain. **7** Break camp and advance into the hill country of the Amorites...**8** See, I have given you this land. Go in and take possession of it.
78. In Deuteronomy 1:2 Moses reminds them it is only an 11-day journey to the promised land. But the reality was it had taken them 40 years to make that journey.
79. What a sobering statement in verse 6. You have been on this mountain long enough.
80. Basically, they had wandered in circles for decades.
81. The reality is we can do the same thing as it relates to our thoughts.

82. We can develop ways of thinking that constantly revolve around the same destructive patterns and really lead us nowhere.
83. I want to ask you a question. Have you dwelt long enough on the same mountain? Have you spent 40 years on an eleven-day trip?
84. It's time to change course and move in a new direction.
85. Part of the reason the children of Israel wandered for 40 years is because they had a wilderness mentality.
86. I think they also had an Egypt mentality. In Egypt they were slaves, had no options, behaved like victims, and as a result stayed bound.
87. God wanted them to think like a nation. With the whole world ahead of them. Not victims but instead victors.
88. And God wants to bring about the same kind of transformation in our thinking as well.
89. I think far too many of us in the world today have that slave mentality, victim mentality, and defeated mentality.
90. And without a doubt, there are struggles and difficulties and obstacles that can make that mindset seem real.
91. But that is a worldly mindset that God never intended believers in Jesus to tolerate or allow to get lodged in our minds without a fight on our part. Over and over His intentions for us were made clear.
92. **Romans 8:37** No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Christ who loved us.
93. **John 10:10** The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life. (NLT)
94. However, this overcoming, victorious, rich and satisfying life is not something that is given to us all at once, rather we learn to live and experience that life little by little. Over time.
95. **Deuteronomy 7:22** The LORD your God will drive out those nations before you, little by little. You will not be allowed to eliminate them all at once, or the wild animals will multiply around you.
96. God said to Israel. I'm not going to give you complete victory all at once. You will win a victory here and a victory there and little by little you will occupy the land.
97. God even gave a reason for this approach. He said, or the wild animals, (beasts) will multiply around you.

98. Yes, the enemies would be gone, but the wild animals, with no one to keep them in check, would multiply, and in reality, you would still wind up with an enemy.
99. If we receive freedom too quickly, we find we are unable to handle the freedom all at once.
100. We don't give children complete freedom all at once. We give them freedom gradually. Little by little. Because they aren't able to handle it all at once.
101. There are a lot of reasons why I am against the lottery, God is not a God of chance. God is opposed to any system where one person wins while everyone else loses.
102. Statistics show that the poorest people, the ones who can't afford to play, make up the vast majority of those who gamble their money away.
103. Another reason why the lottery is dangerous is because much of the time, the person who wins winds up bankrupt within 5 years.
104. If you can't handle \$10 you won't be able to handle 10 million.
105. Too much freedom, too quickly is dangerous.
106. Gradual freedom is appreciated more.
107. Another reason why freedom doesn't come all at once is because freedom has a price.
108. Freedom isn't free. Somebody has to pay the price.
109. Peter, in his first letter, gives some insight into the price of freedom.
1 Peter 5:10 And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.
110. Why do you think suffering is necessary for freedom?
111. I believe one of the reasons suffering is necessary before freedom is because it is through suffering, we realize that we are incapable of being set free by our own power.
112. Suffering serves to remind us we are in fact powerless without the Lord.
113. It is only the power of the Lord Jesus Christ living inside us that allows us to be set free.

114. When we try to do something on our own, fail, and then realize we must wait on Him, our hearts overflow with thanksgiving and praise as He rises up and does what we cannot do for ourselves.
115. That means that struggle or even failure is not something to beat ourselves up over.
116. When we fail. And we will. When we catch ourselves falling back into old thought patterns, resist the temptations the enemy throws at us to make us feel condemned, and instead get back up and try again.
117. I used to think that every time I failed, I had to start over from scratch. If, however, I learn something from that failure, I don't start over, I simply start again, further down the road than I was originally.
118. So don't buy into the enemy's lie that you need to feel condemned when you fail.
- 119. Romans 8:1** *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. (KJV)*
120. When you and I fail. It doesn't mean we are failures. It just simply means we missed the mark. We failed. We are not failures. There is a huge difference.
121. One of the reasons why Satan will dump condemnation on us is because condemnation brings discouragement and discouragement destroys hope.
122. Without hope we give up. But over and over again in the scripture we are told to not give up hope. But to instead trust in the Lord.
- 123. Psalm 42:5** *Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.*
124. Our hope cannot be in what we did or how we did. Our hope cannot be in how or what we feel.
125. Our hope cannot be grounded in what is going on around us, whether good or bad, much or little. The only kind of hope that brings victory is to hope in the Lord.
126. So, let's do a little exercise. When we are discouraged, what kinds of thoughts do we normally have?
127. What could we do to overcome those negative thoughts?
128. How about following the example of David in Psalm 42. Talk to our self. Acknowledge our negative attitude or thinking.

129. Acknowledge the destructive nature of that type of thinking.

130. Quote scripture. Hey you. I remind you what God's word says.

131. God's word says this, and I am going to live according to God's word, not what negative thoughts pop into my mind.

132. **Philippians 2:13** for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.

133. How might we talk to ourselves based on that verse?

134. Hey you. I believe God and His word. I believe God is at work in me. I believe no matter how I feel or how my situation looks, God is working this thing for good, and it will all work out according to his GOOD purpose.

135. That is using the word as a weapon.

Conclusion:

1. So, as we close this morning we will close with this thought.
2. The progress will be slow. That's ok.
3. Little by little is God's way of doing things. Trust in God's ways.
4. You will fail. You will get discouraged. You will at times slip into old ways of thinking.
5. Don't beat yourself up over it and don't let the enemy beat you up either.
6. Trust, run, cling to, hope in, find life in Jesus and His word.
7. And above all else, don't try and do it alone. You need other believers to walk with you. You need other believers to encourage you.
8. You need to see that other believers are just like you and that you are not alone.
9. That's why we have connect groups. They are our method for connecting with other believers.
10. They are our method for developing discipline in our lives.
11. They are our method for being disciplined.
12. This morning I want to ask us to do something.
13. I want to ask every person to pray with and for someone.
14. It could be the person next to you.
15. Or the Holy Spirit might direct you to someone on the other side of the sanctuary.

16. If he does get out of your seat and go to them.
17. All of us have this battle going on in our mind.
18. Pray over everyone.
19. Salvation call.