Winning the War in Your Mind - Part 1

# Replacing the Lies

### (2 Corinthians 4:1-6)

Today we’re beginning a brand-new message series entitled “Winning the War in Your Mind.” And I want to talk about the continual battle, the skirmishes and fights in your mind, struggling and wrestling with thoughts of faith and thoughts of fear. Maybe for you, you want to trust God more, and you’re wrestling with giving a tithe, being faithful in your giving, and yet you want to be in control of your finances. Or maybe in one moment you’re confident in your relationship with God and you believe that he’s with you, that he is for you, and that he’s called you, but in the very next moment, suddenly you’re paralyzed by this sense of insecurity that cripples you. And so, you’re struggling to live the life of freedom that Christ purchased for you on the cross.

I want you to know that whatever struggles, doubts, and fears that you are facing today, that just as most of us came into this world headfirst, whatever you are wrestling with you will want to come out of it headfirst, and therefore we’ve got to win the war in our minds. That’s why we need the Bible and the Holy Spirit to teach us, the church and other believers to reinforce those things that we’ve learned, so that we can get our minds out of the mess that we’re in. You see, we can’t assume that as we live the Christian life that our minds will follow. In fact, that is nothing more than religion, but genuine faith goes headfirst, and as we go headfirst, our legs will follow, our wallet will follow, our relationships will follow, and our freedom will follow. And so, it’s as we go headfirst that everything else follows.

The good news is that God gave us his Word and it’s a powerful weapon, not just to help you, but to transform you and renew your mind with his truth. This is so important because the mind is a battlefield, and the majority of life’s most significant battles are either won or lost in our minds. And so, when it comes to winning the war in our minds, we want to turn to the ultimate thought warrior in Scripture who I believe has to be the apostle Paul. What we’re going to do in this series is we’re going to try to get into the mind of this great apostle as he describes waging war against the lies that attack his mind.

We’re going to begin in second Corinthians chapter 4 as we begin to introduce the subject of winning the war in your mind. In verse one, the apostle Paul says,

“Therefore, since through God's mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart. Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God” (2 Corinthians 4:1-2).

“And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God” (2 Corinthians 4:3-4).

“For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ” (2 Corinthians 4:5-6).

And so, we see in the Scriptures that the god of this age, Satan has blinded the minds of unbelievers so that they won’t believe the truth. These are those who refuse to turn from their wicked ways, people who refuse to keep the truth about God in their mind, and the Bible tells us in Romans chapter 1 that God gave them over to shameful lusts, to the sinful desires of their hearts. And throughout the Scriptures we find examples of those who have debased and perverted minds.

In Luke’s gospel Jesus was once confronted by a demon possessed man who was so tormented in his mind that he ran around naked, harming himself and others, more content to live with the dead then with the living. Luke chapter 8, verse 27 says that,

“For a long time this man had not worn clothes or lived in a house, but had lived in the tombs. When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell at his feet, shouting at the top of his voice, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?” (Luke 8:27-28).

And so, this man was tormented by demons, cutting himself, self-mutilating, and Jesus commanded the evil spirits to come out of the man. But what I want you to notice is what happened the moment he was free from these demons. The Bible tells us in verse 35, that when the people went out to see what had happened,

“When they came to Jesus, they found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting at Jesus' feet, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid” (Luke 8:35).

And so, the first sign that this man who had terrorized them for so long was free, was that he was dressed and in his right mind.

You see, our spiritual enemy, called the devil or Satan, attacks our minds to create strongholds of deception. In other words, he wants you to believe something that is untrue, because my nature he is the deceiver and the father of lies. And so, he tries to shape your thinking one lie at a time, attacking you with intrusive thoughts, temptations, and nightmares, attempting to cause you to doubt the Word of God and the promises of God for your life.

On the other hand, we are able to wage war against the lies of our spiritual enemy because the Bible tells us that “God has not given us a spirit of fear,” he has given us a spirit of “power and of love and of a sound mind” (2 Timothy 1:7, NKJV). And so, even when things are tough, a sound mind still holds to the truth, because it’s a clear mind, it’s focused, and it’s self-disciplined. As God’s Spirit begins to renew our minds with the power and the love of God our minds begin to reflect that truth. Jesus said it this way in John chapter 8, verse 32. He said,

“Then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free” (John 8:32).

There are some of you today that are struggling to experience the freedom God wants you to have because your mind has been filled with Satan’s lies, and so you’re not living the life of freedom that Christ made possible for you to live.

In fact, if there’s one thing that characterizes our culture today it’s that so many people are living their lives based upon the lie that they are free to be whoever they want to be or free to do whatever they want to do. But they haven’t known the truth and God has warned in ages past that the wisdom of the wise will perish, the intelligence of the intelligent will vanish. He said,

“You turn things upside down, as if the potter were thought to be like the clay! Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, "He did not make me"? Can the pot say of the potter, "He knows nothing" (Isaiah 29:16)?

And so, when people build their lives around lies, they quickly find themselves in spiritual bondage, because they have suppressed the truth. And the Bible warns that,

“The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them” (Romans 1:18-19).

And so, there is a world of people who refuse to believe, who suppress the truth by their wickedness, because the god of this age has blinded their minds so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ. I’m reminded of the parable Jesus told in Luke chapter 16 about the rich man and Lazarus. He said, “Between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us” (Luke 16:26). And the Bible says that,

“They are of the world. Therefore, they speak as of the world, and the world hears them. (But) We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error” (1 John 4:5-6, NKJV).

And so, there’s understanding, there’s discernment, and we don’t have to remain captive to the spirit of this world, the spirit of error, because when you know the truth, the truth will set you free (John 8:32).

You see, this is so important, Jesus came to set the captives free, and so we don’t have to remain captive to our thoughts, because the one who is in us is greater than he who is in the world. The apostle Paul tells us that whatever strongholds there are, whatever it is that is holding you prisoner in your mind, he says that you can demolish it. In second Corinthians chapter 10 he says here’s what we do,

“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” (2 Corinthians 10:5).

And so, as followers of Christ we’re not prisoner to our thoughts, but we can actually take our thoughts captive and make them obedient to Christ. Therefore, whatever it is that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, whatever it is, we attack it, we subdue it, and we take it captive.

It’s the knowledge of the truth of God, the Word of God, the sword of the Spirit that cuts away the lies of the enemy and unlocks the promises of God. And so, our government makes laws, our government determines what is legal, but God determines what is right. Jesus said,

“Father, your word is truth” (John 17:17).

And in the same way, your circumstances present you with facts, but God tells you the truth. Circumstances can’t change the truth, because the truth stands fixed in eternity. A doctor’s report can’t change the truth, and so when you know the truth, the truth will set you free.

Today, you and I, we’ve got to know the truth, because when your circumstances are saying one thing, sometimes truth is very hard to understand, but truth can stand in contradiction to your circumstances. You see, truth stands in contradiction to your feelings, truth stands in contradiction to what you see and what you hear, but it’s God’s truth that sets us free.

You see, it’s the knowledge of God’s truth that unlocks everything that is already ours. The Bible tells us in second Peter, chapter 1, verse three,

“His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. (2 Peter 1:3).

And I want you to notice that this is in past tense, the Holy Spirit said, God’s divine power has given. In other words, I already have it, you already have it, and so we have everything we need for life and godliness. That means he has given us everything we need for school, for work, for family, for marriage, and this is so amazing because I looked up the Greek word and the word translated everything means everything.

But let’s go a step further, what did God give you? The Holy Spirit says, “Everything we need for life and godliness.” In other words, everything we need to live life with God likeness, and so he’s talking about righteousness and holiness. And I know that seems really far-fetched, because that seems so far from where you and I are living our lives today if we’re really honest. But sometimes we miss the point, sometimes we stop short of the fullness of revelation because the Bible tells us it’s “through our knowledge of him who called us”. You see, what God has for you, the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations past, is now disclosed to those who believe. Jesus said it this way in Luke chapter 12,

“There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed or hidden that will not be made known. What you have said in the dark will be heard in the daylight, and what you have whispered in the ear in the inner rooms will be proclaimed from the rooftop” (Luke 12:2-3).

And so, everything that God has for you has been made known and the key to our understanding is acquiring knowledge. That’s why I always recommend that you read your Bible, or that you listen to it, because it contains the key to life and godliness. If you allow the right knowledge to go into your mind it begins to unlock the things that God said are already yours.

Therefore, we don’t have to wait for it, God’s already given us everything we need for life and godliness, he’s given us the time, the ability, the resources, and the strength to do what he has called us to do. He’s given us everything we need and so his strength is made perfect in weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9). We can do whatever he has called us to do because we have the same power, the same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead dwelling within us, and so his power is doing that which we cannot do, his power is there for us when we don’t have what it takes.

God has literally given us everything we need for life and godliness, the problem is that we don’t want to think anymore, we don’t want to do the work, we no longer want to participate. But if we read the next verse, the Holy Spirit tells Peter that if we want to win the war in our minds we must participate. He says,

“(God) has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires” (2 Peter 1:4).

And so, we’re invited to participate in the divine nature, so that we can escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. And yet, we have a generation today that has stopped filling their minds with the things of God, and by default what happens is that their minds are filled by whatever is around them. Our minds are filled by whatever we’re listening to, whatever we’re binge watching on Netflix, and that’s why it’s so important that we’re purposeful about what we fill our minds with.

The apostle Paul says it this way in Philippians chapter 4, verse eight,

“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. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me — put it into practice…” (Philippians 4:8-9).

He says to do it, and what he’s describing is being very purposeful about what you think about, what you put in your mind. He says, “think about such things.” “Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me, put it into practice.”

I think it’s important that we regularly ask ourselves who or what is filling our minds? You know, is it you or is it your enemies? Is it you or is it your circumstances? What is it that is constantly dominating your mind? The Bible tells us,

“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15).

And so, if you want to win the war in your mind, you’ve got to choose what you fill your mind with. You may have to change your diet, change your intake, and it may take time, but that will give you the upper hand.

Paul advises Timothy to read the Scriptures to increase his knowledge because only then will you know the truth and it’s the truth that will set you free. God gives us the truth, he makes the knowledge available, but it’s our responsibility to take that knowledge from the pages of the Bible and bring it into the thought patterns of our minds. Our responsibility is to take the knowledge that God has made available and download it, filling our minds, filling our internal hard drive with it, because we’ve got to know the truth of God’s word so that were able to resist falsehood.

My prayer this week has been that you will join me in a renewed commitment to God’s word so that together we can win the war in our minds. My hope is that you and I will be able to unlock what God has given us, not to impress other people, but so that our lives would be better together as the body of Christ as we allow the truth of God’s word to penetrate our minds. David said it this way in Psalm chapter 119,

“I will walk about in freedom, for I have sought out your precepts. I will speak of your statutes before kings and will not be put to shame, for I delight in your commands because I love them. I lift up my hands to your commands, which I love, and I meditate on your decrees. Remember your word to your servant, for you have given me hope” (Psalms 119:45-49).

That’s the kind of hope I want you to have, to be able to take the truth from God’s word about relationships, marriage, finances, and business and apply it. You see, you can’t just leave it there on your nightstand, your coffee table or kitchen table, but you’ve got to read it, memorize it, and begin to apply it. That’s when you will begin to see victory, experiencing lasting freedom, and your life will be different because you took advantage of the truth.

As we close today, there are some of you whom the greatest war in your mind is that you have a distorted view of who God is. Maybe for you the biggest lie that is impacting your life spiritually is that you’ve had a wrong view of God. You thought that he was mad at you, and that he could never love you because of what you’ve done. And so, you think that you’ve been too bad, and God is angry with you, but let me try to help you replace those lies with truth.

You see, the Bible tells us the truth about God’s love and that God loves you so much that there is nothing you can do to earn his love more and there is nothing you could do that would cause him to love you less. God loves you more than you could ever imagine, he loves you so much that he sent his perfect son Jesus, who never ever sinned, and who gave his life willingly for the forgiveness of your sins. Jesus gave his life as the perfect gift, the innocent sacrifice, and God the Father raised him from the dead so that we could know that all of our sins are forgiven. That’s how much God loves you, he wants you to know, he wants you to believe that he loves you that much.

Those of you who have felt distant from God, today you’re creating a new pathway directly to God. With one prayer you can open up heaven and have access to a relationship with God. It begins by simply getting off that old path, that old sinful path, and you’re going to turn toward Jesus and surrender your life to him. The Bible says that when you do, when you respond, God will see, he will hear your prayer, and he will forgive every sin you’ve ever committed. He’s waiting today to throw open the heavens and show you his love so that you can have a brand-new life.

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