Winning the War in Your Mind- Part 2

# Taking Back Your Mind

### (Romans 12.1-2)

Today we are in part two of our series “Winning the War in Your Mind” and I’ve entitled this message “Taking Back Your Mind” because there is a spiritual tug-of-war, a very real unseen spiritual battle going on around us, and much of that battle is won or lost in our minds. And so, there is a spiritual battle going on in the heavenly realms, a battle that happens in our practical everyday lives, but the front line of this battle where the fighting is the fiercest happens in the invisible realm of our minds. It’s for that reason, from the very beginning, that God builds a foundation in our lives so that we are prepared for this spiritual battle.

This message today may be one of the most important messages that you will ever hear in the church because you can’t overcome an enemy that you aren’t equipped to face. This is a spiritual battle and so when Jesus talked to Nicodemus in John chapter 3 he said you must be born of water and the Spirit. This wasn’t a new teaching, but he was just reminding him of the Scriptures in Ezekiel where God said,

“I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws” (Ezekiel 36:25-27).

And so, Jesus was trying to help Nicodemus connect the dots, because his great knowledge was not enough, he must be born again spiritually. A heart that believes without the power of the Holy Spirit can’t fulfill its potential to get beyond religion and develop a genuine relationship with God. And so, the miracle of the new birth is essential because God gives you a new heart and he puts his Spirit in you to unlock the potential of your new nature.

Jesus declared to Nicodemus, “No one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again” (John 3:3).

In other words, it’s not enough to have one without the other. You’ve got to have a new heart and a new Spirit, because everything else in the kingdom flows out of that. And so, the miracle of the new birth is essential because God is giving us a new heart and putting his Spirit in us to unlock our spiritual capabilities. Suddenly, we’re able to connect with God, walking with him and experiencing the full potential of our Christian lives as he moves us, prompting us, and giving us that inner motivation “to follow his decrees and be careful to keep his laws.”

You see, Jesus came that we may have life and have it to the full, and so he gives us the potential to engage in a life that’s thrilling, exciting, powerful, and adventurous. That’s why the Bible encourages,

“To put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness” (Ephesians 4:22-24).

We’ve been invited to participate in the Divine Nature, to put off the old self and to put on the new self; created to be like God in righteousness and holiness. And so, he gives us a new heart and puts his Spirit in us, his presence dwelling in us, living in us, and empowering us to walk in his ways.

And it seems as if we would have the upper hand when it comes to Winning The War In Our Minds because we are the children of God, but so often we find ourselves struggling through life. We find most often that our minds are consumed by things of this world and we’re not engaging on the level of the spiritual world around us. And so, even though the Bible tells us that,

“God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms” (Ephesians 2:6).

We’re just not quite there. We understand that the spiritual world around us is more real than the physical world we live in but we’re not engaging on that level. Intellectually we understand all that Christ accomplished for us on the cross and we profess that we are more than conquerors in Christ, but in our minds we’re still struggling.

Now, last week we talked about replacing the lies of the enemy and today I want to go one step further and talk to you about taking back your mind. This is important because most of us have repented of our sins, we’ve renounced those stumbling blocks in our lives, we’ve stood firm, we’ve resisted the devil, and we’re standing on the promises of God, but honestly we’re still struggling. And this is where it gets really challenging, because for some of you, you’re still trying to overcome in a certain area of your life, you’re still battling with that temptation, and maybe you’re beginning to feel like this whole God thing is just not working out. And so, you’re disappointed and discouraged, but as I said last week, you came into this world headfirst and you’re going to have to come through this headfirst as well.

And so, we need to take back our minds, because these days more than any other, I believe there is an outright assault on the minds of Christian men and women everywhere. That’s why the Bible warns us,

“There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money… lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God…” (2 Timothy 3:1–5).

And so, there is this consistent assault on your mind, a systematic assault on your faith, because we’re in the world, but we’re not of the world. We’re struggling under this constant barrage of everything in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, wearing you down and creating neural pathways in your mind for evil and not for good.

And suddenly, you may find yourself moving in a certain direction that you never intended, but it just kind of happens. And a thought can come so innocently, just like it did with Ananias and his wife Sapphira. The Bible says that they sold a piece of property and in Acts chapter 5,

“Ananias, with his wife’s full knowledge kept back part of the money for himself but brought the rest and put it at the apostles' feet. Then Peter said, "Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land” (Acts 5:2-3)?

Surely Ananias didn’t think this thought came from Satan, I’m sure he thought that this thought came from himself. You know, it seemed like such an innocent plan, nobody would know, and those thoughts come so subtly. In fact, I imagine that most of us have had thoughts of furthering ourselves, making a little money, or getting a little glory in deceitful ways from time to time. But the Bible says that Satan had so filled his heart that he took it to the next level and he lied to the Holy Spirit.

Another time Satan brought a thought to Judas and just like Ananias he didn’t have second thoughts, he allowed that thought to grow inside of him until it became a conspiracy. It was just a thought as Judas was hanging out with Jesus one day, they were ministering to the people in the temple, and the Bible says,

“Satan entered Judas…” (Luke 22:3).

The thought came to him that he could betray Jesus and make a little money as well. Not recognizing the source of that thought, Judas entertained it, he nurtured it, he rehearsed it until that thought became an action. It was just a thought, but something happened in the process, and the Bible says,

“Judas went to the chief priests and the officers of the temple guard and discussed with them how he might betray Jesus. They were delighted and agreed to give him money” (Luke 22:4-5).

You see, there are two things that you can do with your thoughts, you can either resist them or you assist them. And so, we’ve got to be very purposeful to filter our thoughts, taking control of our minds, and rejecting those negative evil thoughts. We don’t open the door to wickedness, but Judas entertained those thoughts, and the Bible says that Satan entered him.

We’ve got to remember that we’ve got the upper hand and not every thought that comes into our minds needs to stay. We’ve got to take back control of our minds, not entertaining thoughts of lust, loneliness, rejection, or depression. This is so important because whatever we fill our minds with today will become our outlook tomorrow. And so, we want to pray and filter our thoughts, recognizing that we are in a spiritual battle. We want to see Jesus victory manifested in our lives and that’s why he warned his disciples in Luke chapter 21,

“Be always on the watch and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man” (Luke 21:36).

I believe as we remain watchful and praying, we will see a shift in the spiritual realm in our region, in our town, and in our families. But we’re going to have to be purposeful as we seek God together, fighting in the Spirit, and surrendering ourselves to God.

In other words, we’re not going to surrender to our negative thoughts, our situations or circumstances, but we’re going to surrender, offering ourselves to God. The apostle Paul urges the believers in Romans chapter 12,

“To offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, this is your spiritual act of worship” (Romans 12:1).

This is the key to winning the war in your mind, because if you’re in Christ, the one in you is greater than the one who is in the world. And so, this is your act of spiritual worship, in the spiritual realm offering your body as a living sacrifice, giving yourself completely to God.

This is a decision we need to make moment by moment. The apostle Paul tells us that before you see a change in the natural, before you see a change in your symptoms or your circumstances, you have to make a decision. He says in verse two,

“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind…” (Romans 12:2).

In other words, don’t conform, don’t lower yourself to the level of this world, don’t lower yourself to the level of your problems, but renew your mind. Think about things differently so that your outlook on your current situation is transformed.

“Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is, his good, pleasing and perfect will” (Romans 12:2).

Renew your minds and don’t allow your thoughts to come down to the level of your problems. Take back your mind, offering your life, your situation, and your circumstances to God, believing that…

“The old has gone, the new has come” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

And so, today we’re not here representing our past, we’re not dwelling on the past, but we’re representing Jesus Christ.

I want to challenge you to change your outlook, because some of you came to church today in the rags of yesterday, but you need to change the way you think, the way you behave, and the way you respond to your circumstances. The Bible tells us that it is a conscious decision, it’s a choice you must make, just like offering your bodies as living sacrifices, and the Bible says,

“Put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator…” (Colossians 3:9).

And so, we need to put on our new identity, our new self, our new nature, because we’re representing the kingdom, we’re representing where we’re going, even if that problem or circumstance is not changing.

We’re taking back our minds, fighting the spiritual forces of darkness, and we’re going to lead with our minds. Taking captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ, regardless of what we feel, in spite of what we see, and no matter what we hear. And so, as followers of Christ, we walk by faith and not by sight, and the Bible tells us,

“Be transformed by the renewing of your mind…” (Romans 12:1-2).

This is spiritual warfare, you don’t conform to the world, you don’t come to terms with the enemy, you don’t accept your situation, but as you renew your mind not only will you be transformed, but your perspective will change, your outlook will change, and you will see the problem change.

But you’ve got to fight, you’ve got to resist, taking back your mind, because anything that the enemy brings into your life over a prolonged period of time becomes a stronghold. No matter what it is, whether it’s sickness, conflict, or addiction, anything that is allowed to fester and continue consistently in your life becomes a stronghold. But the Bible says, even though we live in the world,

“We do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds” (2 Corinthians 10:3-4).

And so, by renewing your mind, you’re changing your default, subconscious, automatic responses to your thoughts. This is important because behind every stronghold is a lie and behind every lie is fear. Your stronghold may be a lonely place where you’ve been fighting for years and yet you still haven’t achieved victory in that area. And so, whatever that stronghold is, it’s a place where we haven’t trusted God’s sufficiency to meet our deepest need at the cross of his son Jesus Christ.

Therefore, the first thing we need to do to overcome the strongholds in our lives is that we need to uncross the wires where we’ve been programmed to believe a lie. And so, wherever the devil has been telling us lies about ourselves for years, we want to learn to think about, focusing, and reprogramming our minds with God’s truth.

And we do that by “Remembering His Faithful Love”.

We fill our minds with thoughts of God’s love, not just that he loves you, but that he has always loved you, and he loves you more than you could even imagine. We remember the Scripture in Psalm chapter 107 where it says,

“Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever” (Psalms 107:1).

And so, as we reflect on God’s faithful love, his enduring love, we give thanks to God because he doesn’t have mood swings, he doesn’t wake up on the wrong side of the bed, he doesn’t need coffee to be nice first thing in the morning. God is good and his love endures forever.

As we remind ourselves of his love, he comforts us and quiets us with his presence. The prophet Zephaniah said,

“The Lord your God is with you; he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing" (Zephaniah 3:17).

And so, we reflect on this fact that he is with us, he delights in us, he rejoices over us and loves us even more. It’s that love, the boundless love of God, the eternal love of God, the Bible says the perfect love of God that “casts out fear” (1 John 4:18). And so, we’re able to overcome strongholds, overcome fear, because his perfect love washes away the foundation of fear, letting us know that he will never abandon us, he is for us and not against us, and he is good all the time.

As we think about such things it changes our outlook because we have purposefully changed the data that we are putting into our minds. And so, by changing what you listen to, changing what you watch, changing what you constantly observe, changing who you hang out with, it renews your mind. You see, that data that you’re downloading into your mind, once it goes into your mind, it goes into your subconscious and becomes your outlook. As his word renews our minds, we’re demolishing strongholds, and we’re creating emotional energy toward the things of God. We’re reprogramming our mind, creating new neural pathways in our brains with the truth of God’s Word.

And then you begin to “Move In His Direction” with the things that you say in your mind that nobody else hears. What I’m talking about is your inner voice, beginning to speak God’s will over yourself, aligning yourself with God’s word, because you will find your life will begin to move in that direction. And so, it’s not dwelling on negative circumstances, but purposefully reaching out and touching the positive. Leaning in and moving in that direction, like the woman who had been bleeding for 12 years. The Bible says in Mark chapter 5,

“She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse. When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak” (Mark 5:26-27).

Now, I want you to notice her response, when she heard that Jesus was healing people, the Bible says,

“She said to herself, "If I only touch his cloak, I will be healed" (Matthew 9:21).

Notice, she didn’t say, “I hope that he touches me, I hope that I’m healed, I hope it’s not going to be just another disappointment.” But she said to herself, “If I only touch his cloak, I will be healed.”

You see, it’s your inner voice that dictates your direction, because that’s where the seed of faith is planted, growing and blossoming. Romans chapter 10 says,

“That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved” (Romans 10:9-10).

You see, it’s believing and confessing, because your life tends to go in the direction of your inner voice. The Bible says that immediately she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering.

“Jesus turned and saw her. "Take heart, daughter," he said, "your faith has healed you." And the woman was healed from that moment” (Matthew 9:22).

I want to encourage you today to take back your mind, not lowering yourself to the level of this world with all of its problems, but to stand in such a way that reflects who you are in Christ and being 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” (Romans 12:2).

Then you will know his good, pleasing, and perfect will. It’s not that the renewing of the mind brings about a miracle, the renewing of the mind brings about transformation, it brings about momentum in the spiritual realm.

The Greek word translated “transformed” refers to the metamorphosis that occurs as a caterpillar turns into a beautiful butterfly or a tadpole becomes a frog. Neither one experiences a transformation that is instantaneous, miraculous, or even supernatural. A caterpillar doesn’t become a butterfly in seconds, but that transformation describes the momentum by which it develops into the butterfly. The transformation doesn’t occur because it’s circumstances had changed, the situation hadn’t changed, but a process of growth and metamorphosis had kicked in.

The Holy Spirit is telling us to be transformed by the renewing of your mind so that you begin to take back your mind and align your thoughts with God’s thoughts and the new things he is bringing about in your life. In other words, metamorphosis is happening because God is causing growth, and so he’s creating momentum, he’s causing a shift in the spiritual realm, but it’s up to you to reach out and touch it by faith. It’s not that we should always expect a miracle, but we need to embrace the momentum, because sometimes it’s the little blessing that will turn into something greater and something better.

As we take back our minds, things will begin to shift in the spiritual atmosphere, one after another like dominoes, things will begin to change in your life. And so, as you see one victory, rejoice in it and get ready for the next one, because God is shifting things and we’re moving from glory to glory and from faith to faith.

Pastor John Talcott

Christ’s Community Church

303 West Lincoln Avenue

Emmitsburg, MD 21727

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(301) 447-4224

[www.cccaog.org](http://www.cccaog.org)

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