

“Mind Wars” - week 3

Decisive Victory

Proverbs 23:7

We are at *war*, and we’re facing a spiritual battle in our minds. *“As a man thinks in his heart, so is he”* (Proverbs 23:7). There are thoughts we think in our head, which is like a super highway, and others we think in our heart. The thoughts in our heart are the deeper thoughts - the ones that have taken root and residence within us. These are the ones God tells us that matter. When a thought enters our heart, it’s where we mixed in belief and emotion to those that entered our minds.

There are thoughts running in and out of there all day long, and they’re coming from all different places. Some of them come from us, some come from the Lord, some come from the very real enemy that we all face and then some thoughts come from the culture. We have to make a decision with every thought that races through the highway of our mind, which one will we add our belief and emotion to, because every time we do that, it drives it down from our head into our heart where it takes root, and that’s when it begins to affect the course of our life - for either good or bad.

You are the gatekeeper of your mind

God has empowered us to play that role, and to understand that not every thought that enters our mind should *stay* there. Some of them need to be evicted. *We* are the gatekeepers. We are empowered by God to decide what goes through the mind and what goes down into the heart. The “gate” is under assault - not just a little bit - but a lot. The battle of the mind that we face in our generation has reached a level of furor and intensity unlike anything that has existed in the past.

Just since Covid in 2020, there has been a thirty percent increase in mental health problems across the United States. We live in the most prosperous and blessed generation in all of human history by so many standards, and yet at the same time, we live in the most anxious, depressed, confused, angry, beat-down, hopeless, and medicated generation that has ever existed.

Prosperity on the outside does not bring prosperity on the inside. Sometimes the more we flourish outwardly, the more we neglect the inward person, which is where our true peace, true hope, and true purpose come from. This is *not* a new battle. It's as old as time, itself. It began in the Garden with the serpent deceiving Eve, and it carried on throughout the Old and New Testaments.

One of the most prolific and famous prophets in the Bible was Elijah. A severe drought had come, brought about by God because of the extensive idol worship in the land. The people were worshipping Baal, a fake god with hundreds and thousands of prophets who led sacrifices and pagan rituals to their demonic entity. God had brought a drought over the land at the word of Elijah, and King Ahab was not happy about it and wanted to kill him.

So Elijah challenged the king and the false prophets to a duel. He called all 450 prophets of Baal together on top of a mountain and said, *"We're going to have a showdown to see whose God is the real God."* They then set up an altar covered in wood. Baal's prophets were told to cry out to their god to send down fire and light the altar. They began to weep and wail and cry out to Baal, cutting themselves and entreating him for hours and hours but nothing happened.

Elijah mocked and taunted them the whole time until he said, *"All right. It's my turn now!"* He then commanded water to be repeatedly poured over the wood on the altar and called out one time to God, who immediately sent down fire from heaven that consumed the altar, the wood, and the water in front of everybody, and showed that Jehovah was the real God.

Then Elijah destroyed all of the prophets of Baal that were assembled, and said to Ahab, *"I hear the sound of rain coming!"* The drought ended because God was recognized as the one true God over the land. However, right after all of that boldness and success, Jezebel, Ahab's wife, threatened Elijah, saying, *"Far be it from me if I don't kill you before the day is over."*

1 Kings 19:3-4 GNT

"Elijah was afraid and fled for his life; he took his servant and went to Beersheba in Judah. Leaving the servant there, Elijah walked a whole day into the wilderness. He stopped and sat down in the shade of a tree and wished he would die. 'It's too much, Lord,' he prayed. 'Take away my life; I might as well be dead!'"

Even after his moment of victory, Elijah felt a wave of fear, depression, and anxiety hit him out of nowhere. Elijah was subject to the same war that we are. At the same time of his celebration, when his guard was down, he went from extreme victory to utter defeat in one hot mental minute. It came, not from Jezebel's threat, but from a spirit of intimidation that came on the *back* of that threat - a spiritual component that Elijah allowed into his heart.

The same man who was bold and courageous before, was now hiding in the wilderness, depressed and wishing he would die. He wasn't exempt from the war, and God had to come and say, "*Elijah, where are you? What are you doing?*" Another example was Paul, the fearless apostle who was used by God in amazing ways. What did he say about himself?

Romans 7:15-25 NLT/AMP

"I don't really understand myself, for I want to do what is right, but I don't do it. Instead, I do what I hate. 18] ... I want to do what is right, but I can't. 19] I want to do what is good, but I don't. I don't want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway. 22] I love God's law with all my heart. 23] But there is another power within me that is at war with my mind. This power makes me a slave to the sin that is still within me. 24-AMP] Wretched and miserable man that I am! Who will [rescue me and] set me free from this body of death [this corrupt, mortal existence]? 25-AMP] Thanks be to God [for my deliverance] through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

This war is *real*, and if we don't wage it the right way in our thoughts, we will be brought into captivity as it wages against our soul. Paul said that despite the severity and intensity of the war, God will deliver us and set us free, with victory over the battle of the mind and heart. *That's good news!* No one is exempt from the battle, and as believers, we don't hide from it. God, himself, has called us to win it, but how are we supposed to do that?

2 Corinthians 10:3-5 NIV

"For 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. We demolish arguments [strongholds] and every pretension [stupid unregenerated thought] that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ."

The problem for most of us is that we underestimate this battle we're in, and the reason we're losing the mental warfare is because we're not even *engaged* in the fight. We haven't stepped up and said, "*I'm in the fight now, not with my own weapons, but with the weapons from God that have divine power to demolish strongholds.*"

God doesn't want us to just barely get *past* the stronghold, he wants us to demolish it, like an imploding building - it's there, and then it's *gone*! That's the kind of victory God wants us to have, but it starts when we understand that there is a war and that now we're engaging in it. The term "stronghold" appears over fifty times in the Old Testament and was often referred to as a fortress with very difficult access.

When a stronghold takes root in our life, it's more than just errant thoughts running through our mind, but it's when a pattern of thinking that's not biblical or from God gets down into our heart - takes root - takes us captive and brings us into a fortress of isolation very difficult to access. Some common strongholds we face are fear, anxiety, addiction, anger, depression, self-loathing, intimidation, offense, bitterness, unforgiveness, feeling unworthy, patterns of sin, rebellion, body image issues, and pride. Dealing with these starts with a change in our disposition.

Psalm 27:1 NIV

"The Lord is my light and my salvation - whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life - of whom shall I be afraid?" That is our confidence of victory over all of our strongholds. The Lord has decreed that he is the true Stronghold of our life and is waiting for us to tap into that and to believe it.

John 16:33 NIV

"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart [mind]! I have overcome the world." God's will for us is peace in the trouble, not peace away from the trouble.

1 John 4:17 NKJV

"Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world." Jesus didn't come just to put on a show to impress us and then leave us on our own. *No*. He came to show us what a redeemed life full of the Holy Spirit could look like on this earth. His victory is the same victory that we will have as we overcome the world.

John 1:14 NKJV

"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." Grace is not just a big cover-up for the sin in our life, but it *is* God's empowering presence - his power, strength, ability, and favor for us to do the things that, apart from him, we cannot do on our own. Jesus needed that same grace to fulfill his mission, and he said that we also have access to it as his believers and followers.

Romans 5:1-2 NKJV

"Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." That empowering grace is activated and accessed only by *our faith*. That means that it starts with *us*, in our hearts and minds, as we say, *"I believe that's for me, and I'm going after that because God said I could have it!"*

Until we get in the fight and do that, we're fighting a losing battle in our mind. But, the moment we begin to tap into God's miraculous grace, everything starts to change. When Jesus saves a person, it's as though they've been held captive in a cage - they acknowledge the work he did and submit their heart to him as Jesus opens their cage and flips open the door and says, *"You're free!"*

We say thank you to him but then we stay in the cage. *How silly is that?* There comes a point where we have to build up our courage and walk out of the cage. By faith, we access his grace and let him bring the victory that he died to give us. It comes by *our faith* - when we begin to believe God and his Word, we will experience those things he promised us.

Romans 10:17 NKJV

"So then faith comes by hearing, [and hearing, and hearing, and hearing...] by the word of God." There's only one way that faith will come alive in us and allow us to detect what his grace wants to bring us. We have to so saturate ourselves with Truth - with his Word, by hearing, and hearing, and hearing, so that, when the moment comes, faith explodes in our heart and it pulls on the grace of God - and the breakthrough comes - we demolish strongholds.

Satan's only shot to beat us is to keep us ignorant - to not know, understand, and believe who we are in Christ and what we have access to in Jesus Christ. The moment we believe and realize that, he's lost - he's defeated. Satan traffics in lies, deception, and accusations. That's all he's got - the ability to invade our thoughts - but *we* are the gatekeepers of our mind, and we have God's grace by faith - and *we win!*

That's the truth - and Truth has a tipping point. As we hear, and hear, and hear the Word of God and Truth, the bucket keeps filling - and, at the right moment, it will tip, and dump a mountain of grace on our life to break every chain, and to demolish every stronghold. God doesn't want us bound to strongholds - he wants us *free* - but whatever we're full of, that's what will tip over into our life - either for good, or for bad.

The Book of Revelations talks about bowls that are filled with incense - the prayers and supplications of God's people. At a certain point when the bowls are full, an angel takes fire from the altar of God and mixes it with the incense of those prayers and dumps it out over the earth. Not every stronghold can be demolished with one hit of Truth - or two - or three - or *ten*. It's a *war*, and we're in this for the long haul - we're in it for the victory.

There is a tipping point for Truth in our life. As we hear and hear and hear the Word of God, the tipping will come, and we'll get the breakthrough we need *if we persevere*. God wants us free - in our mind - our heart - our life - and in our experience.

2 Corinthians 10:3-6 The Message Bible

"For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled."

How do we do this, practically?

1] Get in the Bible - *hear it, and hear it, and hear it...* don't just read it, but hear it with your heart. Don't just let the words run through your mind, but cram them down into your heart, and say, *"I'm taking that - that's mine - I believe that!"*

2] Pray - spend time seeking God. Prayer is not a monolog - it's a dialog. If you keep talking to God, he *will* talk back - he'll speak to your heart and strengthen you - you'll hear his voice speaking to *you*.

3] Worship - in the Old Testament God sent the worshippers ahead of the armies when they fought battles, because worship laid the foundation for victory in battle. It is the kind of worship that exalts God - that says who he is and how mighty he is. Listen to it everywhere and all the time - and it will begin to get into your heart and fill the buckets and tip them over.

4] Declare the Word - speak out loud the truth that you know and tell it to God, to your own soul, and to all of hell. Declare it, and it drives it down deeper and deeper into your heart. The Bible says that David encouraged himself in the Lord *...and we need to do the same thing!*

Prayer

Father, in Jesus' name, we have heard Your Word and we believe the Truth. We believe that You want us to be victorious and free - more than overcomers. We receive Your Word. We believe it, and we believe that it will take root in our hearts. As we begin to tap into Your mighty grace, it will bring freedom from any strongholds in our life. We thank You for that! We love You and honor You. In Jesus' name. Amen