

Battle for Your Mind

I. Introduction

- a. Have you ever wondered why you don't always do what you know you ought to do?
- b. Have you ever struggled with horrible and conflicting thoughts that come into your mind, uninvited?
- c. Have you ever wondered why if the Christian life is supposed to be joyful, why you are so full of misery?
- d. If your answer is yes to any of these questions, then you are quite normal in your experiences as a Christian.
 - i. In fact, these are common struggles that many of us endure.
 - ii. And there is comfort to us when we fail, because the bible says, *"There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."* (Romans 8:1)
 - iii. The truth is we aren't meant to remain defeated in these areas, even though it is our common experience. **Jesus didn't just come to see that you could receive forgiveness and freedom from the PENALTY of sin...He came also so that you and I could be freed from the POWER of sin.**
- e. This verse I just quoted comes from a lengthy passage in the book of Romans where the Apostle Paul is describing his personal struggle with sin.
 - i. In fact, he says in Chapter 7:21 *"So I find this law at work; when I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being (my inner man, my soul, my heart that has been changed to want the things of God), I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God – through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin."*
 - ii. The apostle Paul describes the battle he sees within himself, he sees his body and his mind at war, and wonders out loud how the law of sin is to be overcome.
- f. There is a cosmic battle going on around us. Most of the battle is invisible to you and I. And so we don't pay it much mind.
 - i. **The 8th Chapter of Romans should be called the manual of Christian Victory.**
 1. I would hope that if you have been struggling in your life with internal conflicts, that you would spend the rest of this week, reading and re-reading verses 1-17 of this chapter.
 - ii. You may recall verse one of Chapter 8 that I read a moment ago, that *"there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."* If you will look at verse two, you will see him describing the war of two laws:
 1. *"...because through Christ Jesus, the law of the spirit of Life set me free from the law of sin and death."*

2. The law of sin and death, or the Power of Sin is like the law of Gravity.
 - a. It cannot be avoided.
 - b. It rules the universe.
 3. In the same way, Sin and death are the law of conduct for all of mankind.
 - a. The bible clearly states that “*all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.*”
 4. The only way that you can be freed from one supreme law if for another law to exist that overrides the first one.
 5. Just as gravity may not be overcome, it is in fact resisted through the use of a higher law, the law of aerodynamics.
 - a. That is, something that is lighter than air will rise, despite the rule of gravity.
 6. And this is precisely how we are freed from the law of sin’s power which governs our behavior.
 7. It is called the Law of the Spirit of Life.
 8. This Law of the Spirit of Life comes to rule WHEN we do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.
 9. Verse 5 tells us that this occurs BECAUSE “*those who live according to the sinful nature have their MINDS SET on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit, have their minds set upon what the Spirit desires.*”
 10. I hope that you can see the compass pointing to victory.
 - a. That is, we are ruled by the Law of Sin BECAUSE our MINDS are set upon what our body (old nature) desires.
 - b. And we are can be ruled by the Law of Life when our MINDS are set upon what the Spirit (new nature) desires.
 - c. The Ruler of our life and therefore our conduct is the direct result of what the mind is set upon (focused on).
- iii. Not by the power of the mind or self though.
1. Before we get too much further, though, I need to clarify something right here. You will not achieve victory over sin simply by the power of your mind or your will.
 2. The bible says that you will fail. Unless your life is fortified by the power of the Spirit of God, you will fail in most attempts you make to conquer sin’s power over your life.

II. Three Part Composition of Man

- a. In order to understand how God works in you and I, we need an illustration.
 - i. I have put on the overhead, a drawing of the three parts of man’s make-up.

ii. The Body

1. The Outer man
2. Our earth suit.
3. The part of us that will someday die and cease to exist, which will return to dust.
4. It is also the part of us that interfaces with our environment. It is how we related to our physical world.
5. We are not bodies of life that just so happen to have a spirit. No, we are spirits who have an earth suit or body for us to function in this physical world.

iii. The Soul

1. The Inner man.
2. Our Mind, Will, Emotions, Personality.
 - a. Our Mind is not the same as our brain.
3. The eternal part of who we are. It will live forever.
4. It is the part of us that interacts with our body and with our spirit.
5. It is where decisions are made, thoughts occur and are acted upon, and feelings exist.

iv. The Spirit

1. Because we are all spiritual beings, we were created with a spirit.
2. This permits us to relate or interact with the spiritual world.
3. The problem lies in the fact that we were born with a spirit that is “dead”
4. Adam was created with a spirit that was alive. That means, capable of communicating with God.
 - a. When Adam sinned, his spirit “died.” Not death as oblivion or no longer existing. Death in the terminology of “being separated.”
 - b. Separated from God. That was Spiritual Death.
 - c. And you and I were born spiritually separated from God.
 - d. In fact, that is why God sent His son, Jesus, to bring us back to spiritual life, or relationship with God.
5. But despite the fact that your spirit is “dead TOWARD God, it still exists, and accesses the spiritual dimension.
 - a. The proof of that is how spiritualists, mediums, clairvoyants, witches, etc. exist.
 - i. They are accessing the spiritual realm that exists.
 - b. But they do not have access to God.
 - i. Their access is to demons and beings in the spiritual dimension.
 - c. In fact, I know of people who before they were Christians saw into the spiritual realm, they had spiritual experiences. But their experiences were devoid of God’s presence.

6. When you placed your faith in Jesus Christ, you became spiritually alive, because the Holy Spirit, the very spirit of God came into your Spirit and restored you relationally to God as well as FORTIFIED your spirit by dwelling in you.
7. In fact (as we are studying on Wednesday night) when you placed your faith in Jesus Christ, the full power, authority and FULLNESS of God filled your spirit.
 - a. You begin to hear God's voice
 - b. You begin to see God's presence
 - c. You begin to understand the things of God.
 - i. In fact, the bible tells us that Lu 24:45 - *Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, ...* this was not a mental experience. This was a spiritual experience.
 - ii. The bible says that the non-Christian cannot understand the things of God because they are foolishness or nonsense to him.
 - iii. That is because until the spirit of man receives the spirit of God, it will not know God.
 - d. What happens is, your mind becomes spiritually informed, your emotions become spiritually controlled, and your will becomes spiritually fortified.
 - i. Just like bran flakes that were simply empty fiber, once fortified with vitamins (filled and strengthened with vitamins), they become life giving and powerful.
 - ii. Or just like three tools on my workbench; my circular saw, my drill and my power sander.
 1. They were designed to run on electricity.
 2. Now, I can make them work, just barely, without power, by using my own strength to use them. I can run the saw blade back and forth over a piece of wood, or pound the drill bit into a piece of wood with a hammer or push the face of the power sander back and forth to smooth a surface.
 3. But I won't ever get what they were designed for, unless I plug them into electrical power.]
 4. They, like our Mind, Will and Emotions, were designed to run on power, not on brute strength.
 5. The power comes from the Spirit of God who designed them to run on power. His Power.
8. **Ephesians 3:16 (I pray) that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man,**
 - 1.

III. Threshold of the Mind

- a. Some of you have received and read a booklet that my wife, Jennifer, has handed out, called “A Study of the Mind.” If you haven’t received it yet, we have copies at the back that you can take home with you to do a personal study of this subject as well.
- b. This little book opens with a profound statement, “**Spiritual battles are won or lost at the threshold of the mind, not in the mind.**”
- c. Remember, I said that **the mind is not the same as the brain?**
 - i. Your brain is an organ, a bunch of cells with electrical impulses.
 - ii. Your brain is considered a part of your body, not your soul.
 - iii. Your brain is essentially a big computer, responsible for *processing* the variety of inputs it gets from the rest of your body from the environment it is in.
 - iv. This information that your brain processes must be filtered by your mind
 - v. **The mind is essentially the seat of your thoughts.**
 1. It is another word for your “heart” or your “soul.”
 - vi. Your thoughts, your emotions and your will act upon the different inputs and pieces of information
 - vii. In fact, your heart/soul is composed of your MIND, WILL and EMOTIONS.
 1. The mind is the center of your judgments.
 2. The emotions are the center of your feelings.
 3. The will is the decision making component of your being.
 4. It is informed by both the knowledge and judgments of the mind and the feelings of the emotions.

IV. Castle Illustration

- a. If you have ever seen a photo of any of the great castles in Europe, you find that they oftentimes were surrounded by thick walls. These walls were built to keep out invaders and conquering armies. **The weakest point of these castles of course, were the gates.** The builders would try to build chokepoints so that invading armies would have to be constricted to a narrow area where they would be the most vulnerable as they approached the gate to try to breach it.
- b. The sad thing for many of these castles is that they were seldom taken by active warfare. Many of them unknowingly **let their enemies in** where they were conquered quickly with almost not battle at all.
- c. The **entry point** of the fortification was the deciding point for every castle. If an enemy got past that point, they were free to wreak havoc on the rest of the fortification, because no matter how thick the walls, how great the army, once the enemy was inside it could do as it wished.

- V. **Threshold** – just like the fortress or a castle, the weakest point in our make up is the threshold or the entry point of our mind.

- a. **The threshold of our mind is crossed when we fix our attention upon something.**

- i. To understand this, we should try to understand the role that the will has as the threshold guardian.
 1. Recall that we said earlier, that the mind and the emotions act as informers to our will.
 2. That is, we make DECISIONS based upon the information that our mind (our thinker) and our emotions (our feeler) have given us.
 3. They in turn have INTERPRETED information that they have received from two sources:
 - a. our bodies (including the senses and the brain)
 - b. and our spirit.
 4. It is the act of engaging our will, a conscious or unconscious decision, to do something or think something that we are agreeing to do something.
 - 5.
- ii. **Entertaining** –
 1. Imagine what it means to “entertain” someone. A child for example. It means very literally to “hold their attention.
 2. Some other synonyms: consider, think about, have company, amuse, or pay attention to.
 3. Now think about entertaining a thought.
 - a. We have thoughts all day long.
 - b. Some of them we entertain, others we throw away.
 - c. Millions of thoughts every day.
 - d. Even as I was typing this sermon, I had stray thoughts popping into my mind.
 - i. I refused to entertain them.
 - ii. I refused to pay any mind to them.
 - iii. I chose to pay attention to what I was doing.
 - iv. I chose to focus on the sermon and not on the distracting thoughts.
 4. A thought is not sin.
 - a. It is just that, a thought. It comes from anywhere.
 - b. But we decide by the focus and attention we give it, whether we will entertain it (keep it and think about it) or discard it for one reason or another.**
 - c. Psychologists say that when we tell people not to think about an object that they graphically describe, we will find ourselves unable to get it out of our minds.
 - i. It is like saying “don’t think about a pink Cadillac.” As soon as someone says that, we find ourselves unable to NOT think about it.
 - ii. That is, unless you have learned the secret of renewing your mind.

- iii. When you renew your mind, you set aside the former thing and set your mind upon something new, better, right, correct and good.
- iv. Romans 12:1

VI. Setting our Minds

- a. Gaining control and mastery over the threshold of our mind and protecting our lives from the control of sin comes from this act of renewal.
 - i. The key word here is setting, or focusing our mind's attention upon something.
 - ii. God requires very little from us except to respond to His love and grace. And choosing to focus upon Him as opposed to our own desires is one of those responses we get to make.
 - 1. It is in this choosing that we also get to experience the power of the Spirit of God.
 - 2. It is in this choosing that we literally plug into the power of the Spirit.
 - 3. And what do we choose?
 - 4. There are three scripture passages that tell us:
 - a. [Col 3:2](#) - Set your **mind** on the things above, not on the things that are on earth
 - b. [Ro 8:6-7](#) For the **mind** set on the flesh is death, but the **mind** set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the **mind** set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able (does not have the power *-dunatos-*) {to do so,}
 - c. [Mt 16:23](#) But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your **mind** on God's interests, but man's."
 - d. Did you notice it? Setting the MIND upon either the flesh/self interests, or upon the Spirit or God's interest.
 - e. Even Jesus rebuked Peter for this! Jesus knew that the source of His power was in keeping his focus upon His Father's interests, Upon God the Father.
 - 5. The literal interpretation of "setting your mind" means *to direct one's mind to a thing, to seek, to strive for*. What we focus our attention upon. What we think about.
 - 6. The scripture tells us that the setting of our minds on this world, or man's ways is death, or separation, or loss of the Divine Presence and glory in our lives.
 - 7. But the setting our minds on God and the things of God leads to life.
 - 8. It is a simple choice, far simpler than we realize.

VII. Interactions

- a. The interaction between the soul (mind, will, emotions) and our Spirit and our Body is where the decisive battles take place.

- b. It is a battle of rulership.
- c. Who will rule the soul...the eternal part of who we are?
 - i. Will God rule us through our innermost spirit?
 - ii. Will our bodies rule us through their passions?
 - iii. Will our “old man” rule us through our minds and emotions?
- d. This battle has a great deal to do with how our useful our lives are as Christians to God.
 - i. If our bodies rule us, we are said to be “carnal.”
 - ii. If our “old man” rules us (old patterns of thinking and feeling) then we are said to be setting our minds upon the things of this earth.

VIII. Peep Holes:

- a. Most of us have peep holes in our front doors. We hear a knock and what do we do? We don't swing the door wide open in this day and age. We peek through the door hole and look to see who it is.
- b. Once we glance and RECOGNIZE the visitor, do we open the door or keep it closed?
 - 1. What will you choose to do today?
 - 2. What has been ruling your mind?
 - 3. You are no longer a slave to sin. God has a way for you to plug into His power and to overcome the weakness of your own will.
 - 4. Won't you set your mind on things above? Won't you fill your mind with the things of God?