

## Battle for the mind

In our series of spiritual renewal so far, we have spoken of Nehemiah's example of spiritual obedience: how he desired to do God's will and wanted to be closer to Him, how he prayed for the forgiveness of sins: his own and those of his people, how he was God-centered and holy. Next we learned the importance of prayer and reading God's word, the Bible. Last week, we discussed spiritual battles that we go through and that are occurring around us constantly. This week, we're going to discuss the battle for our minds. This battle is an internal battle that we fight: against the world, our selves and Satan and his demons.

The mind is the main battlefield in spiritual warfare. Every attack of Satan involves the human mind.

Rom 8:6-7a For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. <sup>7</sup>Because the carnal mind is enmity against God (NKJV)

Satan battles for the mind because it is so intertwined with the heart and hence with our actions. Our heart, mind and actions are who we are, what defines us.

Prov 23:7 For as he thinks within himself, so he is. (NASB)

It is why God tells us to love him with all our heart and soul and mind and strength.

Mark 12:30 Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.

Do we realize we're in a battle for our minds? If you answer "Yes", then you have to be ready to fight to win that battle. If you answer "No", then the way I see it, there are two possible reasons: 1 – you are no threat to Satan, which means you are doing nothing that might be considered righteous or good, or 2 – you are in a battle and don't even know it.

So lets' look at some ways we battle for our minds.

The first might be questioning God: In the Garden of Eden, we see that Satan leads us to question what God has said to us. Gen 3:1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" Are we seeing that happen in our own lives? Do we find ourselves questioning what God has said? If you do, then you are in a battle.

We also must be on the alert of being deceived. Satan and his demons will always try to deceive us into doing, thinking, believing a lie over the truth. It is one of the great tools in his bag. John 8:44 You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies. You need to make sure that what you are hearing is the truth. I know of many who would profess to know God and then ask me what I think about The DaVinci Code and what it says. How can they know God if they don't know the truth? 2 Cor 4:4 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.

Repel Satan with scripture, which is truth. If you hear Satan telling you a lie that causes you to begin to doubt what God has said, you need to do what Jesus did and go back to

scripture and defeat him with the Truth. God wants us to have an intelligent faith. Blind faith is no faith to God. He wants us to know Him and His truth. Have we done our research to know what is true and what is a lie?

Are you discouraged, stressed out, tired, depressed? If so, maybe it's because you have been listening to the wrong voice. Maybe you need to return to the voice that showed you the light at the beginning. Rev 2:4-5a Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love. Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. Rev 3:20 Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.

So what can we do? How do we fight? How do we stand firm? This might be the most important thing you ever learn in your Christian life. You must understand and follow through on this battle plan. If you do not, then you will lose the battle. A lost battle for your mind is equivalent to death. Once Satan has your mind, there is nothing God can do for you.

The battle for the mind is dependant on three things: setting our minds on the right things, renewing our minds with the right things and fixing our minds on the right things. Let's look at each of these things a little closer.

Setting your mind on the right things means to set your mind on things above. Col 3:2 Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things (NIV) When we set our minds on things above, we don't allow Satan to detour our thoughts. We know what we need to be thinking and by setting our minds on things above and not on earthly things, we ensure that even when Satan tempts us with things of earthly values, we will be able to stand firm because it will not have an effect on us.

It's important to make a clarification now of what is meant by setting our minds on things above, or having the mind of Christ. This concept of thinking Christian does not mean that we can only think of things that are Christian. Everything that is Christian can be looked at in an earthly way and everything that is earthly, or secular, can be looked at in a Christian way. For example: When we watch TV, we can watch a Christian program and be thinking about how big a church they have, how much money they must bring in, whether the music is well-played, the speaking ability of the teacher and any other number of earthly thoughts. This is true of anything Christian – the Church, the Bible, the Cross. Even the story of Christ. The secular world has taken all of these things and made them what they want them to be, regardless of whether it's true or not. In the same way, we can be watching a different channel and see a secular show and watch it recognizing where the characters have sinned, how they've incorrectly viewed the world and what effect it had on them, how good things happened to them and how we might react if the same thing happened to us. We can add Christ into anything secular if we want to. And this is the meaning of Christian thinking or thinking like Christ. It does not mean that we can't go to the movies or hang out with non-Christians or listen to non-

Christian music. It means we should think everything we think in terms of What Did Jesus Do and What Did Jesus Think and What Did Jesus Say?

So we need to set our minds on things above or in other words, in all that we encounter during the day, see it how God sees it and react as Jesus would. This kind of thinking is what the Bible is calling us to do.

Next, we must constantly renew our mind. Romans 12:2a And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. We cannot allow our minds to be conformed to this world, to this earth, to this culture, to this time. We must remember that God never changes and so His truth never changes. It is this character of always being the same today, yesterday and tomorrow that allows us to know what is right in His eyes. If He changed, we would find ourselves debating whether something He told us is still true or if it has changed. The world would have us believe that God does change and that the God that created the world in the Old Testament is a different God than the one who rules us now. That he is more forgiving, more lenient, more accepting. If that were true, then we would have no way to understand who God is because today we would see one thing and tomorrow something else. This is nonsensical – how can God expect people to do the right thing if the right thing changes - and it leads us down a wrong path. That thinking is a lie of Satan to trick people into feeling safe. We must continue to renew our minds with the Word of God. By doing so, we are constantly learning what God is telling us. Don't let Satan trick you into not studying or reading the Bible. You don't have enough time, you can do it tomorrow, you already know it all. Don't believe it. Renew you mind constantly. Don't let it be conformed by this world. The world will teach you a lie. Eph 4:17-18 So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. <sup>18</sup>They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. We must continue to be renewed. Eph 4:23 And be renewed in the spirit of your mind.

Finally, we must fix our mind. In the King James, it translates “Gird up” our minds. It means to prepare our minds. 1 Peter 1:13 Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; The meaning here is one of being on the offensive. We have set our minds on things above and we now look at things the way God does, then we renew our minds by constantly reading the Word of God to know His will and by not conforming to the thinking of the world. Here we must go on the offensive and take control of our thoughts. 2 Cor 10:5 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. We take EVERY thought captive. That means that every thought we have, we should think as God would. If there is a thought that we should not have, that is causing us pain, stress, depression, hurt, we need to take that thought and put it in its proper place. That's easier said than done and it takes time to get this part right. But perfection only comes after practice and it is only by doing the work of taking those thoughts captive that we will find ourselves able to do so. When we have a thought that needs to be taken captive, we must determine what the right thinking is – lucky for us, we have renewed minds and we are not thinking like the world and instead are thinking on things above.

Take it captive and don't let your thoughts run your life, you run your thoughts. By doing this, the tools that Satan uses become useless and things like stress, pain, depression and the like have no hold on us.